

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



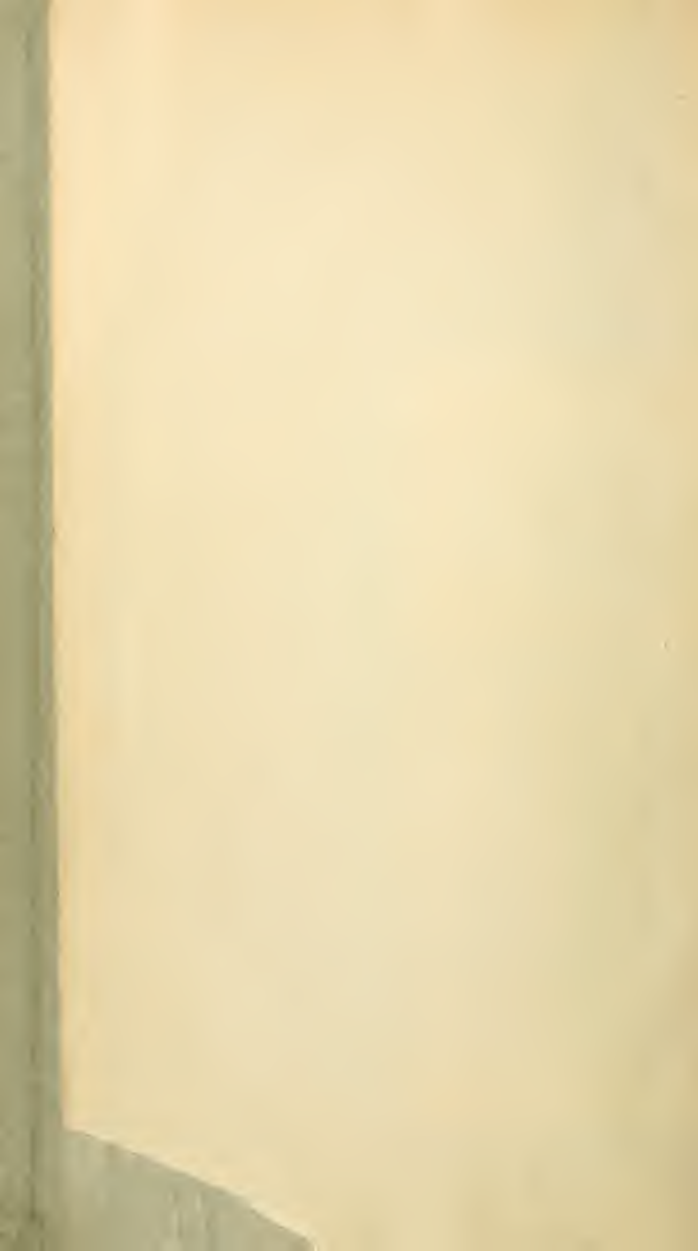
3 3433 08044538 4

*The*  
*Gordon Lester Ford*  
*Collection*  
*Presented by his Sons*  
*Worthington Chauncey Ford*  
*and*  
*Paul Leicester Ford*  
*to the*  
*New York Public Library.*

A. TIAMIS  
II







THE

CORRESPONDENCE

OF

JOHN ADAMS, ESQUIRE,

LATE PRESIDENT

OF

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA;

CONCERNING THE

BRITISH DOCTRINE OF IMPRESSMENT;

AND

MANY INTERESTING THINGS

WHICH OCCURRED DURING HIS ADMINISTRATION:

11

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE BOSTON PATRIOT.

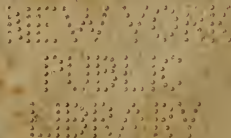
BALTIMORE:

PUBLISHED AT THE OFFICE OF THE EVENING POST,

BY H. NILES,--SEPTEMBER 15, 1809.

G. DOBBIN AND MURPHY, PRINTERS.

Checked :  
17 1818



THE NEW YORK  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

**P124347**

ASTOR, LENOX AND  
TILDEN FOUNDATION



## PUBLISHER'S INTRODUCTION.

---

THE cause which produced this correspondence is simply this. Mr. Adams, in several written communications, ventured to disapprove of the conduct of the leading *Federalists* to the eastward, and particularly of what he very aptly termed "Mr. Gore's declaration of war against France." He also gave the weight of his character in favor of the late measures of government, so much reprobated and so violently opposed by the "*British party in America.*" These proceedings naturally kindled the ire of the *Federalists*, or the disciples of the *Hamilton* school, and they censured him in a loud and indecent manner; stating that "he had never possessed the confidence of the Federal party," &c. — To shew *why* he did not possess their confidence were these essays written. For an attentive perusal every man will find ample compensation by a knowledge of many extremely interesting facts, hitherto veiled from the eye of the public.



# LETTERS

OF

JOHN ADAMS, ESQUIRE,

LATE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

---

## LETTER I.

*The inadmissible principles of the king of England's proclamation of October 22, 1807, considered.*

QUINCY, JAN. 9, 1809.

SIRS,

In my letter of the 26th of December it was remarked that the proclamation for pressing seamen from our merchant ships had not been sufficiently reprobated. Some of the reasons for that opinion will be found in the following commentaries, which were written for private amusement, within a few days after the appearance in public of this

### TEXT.

*"The proclamation of the king of Great Britain, requiring the return of his subjects, the seamen especially, from foreign countries, to aid in this hour of peculiar danger, in defence of their own."*

*"But it being an acknowledged principle, that every nation has a right to the service of its subjects in time of war, that proclamation could not furnish the slightest ground for an embargo."*

This partial description has a tendency to deceive many, and no doubt has deceived thousands. *It is concealing the asp in a basket of figs.* The dangerous, alarming and fatal part of the proclamation is kept carefully out of sight. Proclamations of one kind are of immemorial usage; but the present one is the first of the kind. Proclamations of the first kind, issued usually in the beginning of a war, are in effect but simple invitations to subjects, who happen to be abroad, to return home. To deny the right of the king to issue them, would be as unreasonable as to deny his right to send a card of invitation to one of his subjects to dine with him on St. George's day. ~~But~~ in neither case is the subject bound by law to accept the invita-

B

tion. As it is natural to every human mind to sympathize with its native country when in distress or danger, it is well known that considerable numbers of British commonly return home from various foreign countries, in consequence of these invitations by proclamation. The British ambassadors, consuls, agents, governors and other officers give the proclamations a general circulation, stimulate the people to return, and contrive many means to encourage and facilitate their passages. All this is very well; all this is within the rules of modesty, decency, law and justice; no reasonable man will object to it. But none of these proclamations, till this last, ever asserted a right to take British subjects, by force from the ships of foreign nations, any more than from the cities and provinces of foreign nations. On the other hand, it is equally clear, that British subjects in foreign countries are under no indispensable obligation of religion, morality, law or policy, to return in compliance with such proclamations. No penalty is annexed by English laws to any neglect; no, nor to any direct or formal disobedience. Hundreds, in fact, do neglect and disobey the proclamations to one who complies with them. Thousands who have formed establishments and settled families, or become naturalized, or made contracts, or enlisted on board merchant ships, or even ships of war in foreign countries, pay no regard to these orders or invitations of their former sovereign. Indeed, all who have become naturalized in foreign countries, or entered into contracts of any kind, public or private, with governments or merchants, or farmers or manufacturers, have no right to return until they have fulfilled their covenants and obligations. The president of the United States has a legal authority to issue similar proclamations, and they would be as much respected by American citizens, all over the globe. But every American would say his compliance was voluntary, and none, whose engagements abroad were incompatible, would obey—But “it is an acknowledged principle, that every nation has a *right* to the service of its subjects in time of war.” By whom is this principle acknowledged? By no man, I believe, in the unlimited sense in which it is here asserted. With certain qualifications and restrictions it may be admitted. Within the realm and his own dominions the king has a right to the service of his subjects at sea and on land, by voluntary enlistment, and to send them abroad on foreign voyages, expeditions and enterprises—but it would be difficult to prove the right of any executive authority of a free people to compel free subjects into service by conscriptions or impressments, like galley slaves, at the point of the bayonet, or before the mouths of field artillery. Extreme cases and imperious necessity, it is said, have no law; but such extremities and necessity must be very obvious to the whole nation, or freemen will not comply. Impressments of seamen from British merchantmen in port or at sea, are no better than the conscription of soldiers by Napoleon or Lewis XIV. who set him the example. So much for that part of the proclamation, which the text produces to public view. Now for the other part, which it has artfully concealed.

The king not only commands his subjects to return, but he commands the officers of his navy to search the merchant ships of net

traits, (meaning Americans, for it is not applicable to any other, nor intended to be applied to any others,) and impress all British seamen they find on board, without any regard to any allegations of naturalization; without any regard to any certificates of citizenship; without regard to any contracts, covenants or connections they have formed with captains or owners; and without regard to any marriages, families or children they may have in America. And in what principle or law is this founded? Is there any law of God to support it? Is there any law of nature to justify it? Is there any law of England to authorise it? Certainly not? The laws of England have no binding force on board American ships more than the laws of China or Japan.—The laws of the United States alone, of which the law of nations is a part, have dominion over our merchant ships. In what law then is it grounded? In the law of nations? It is a counterfeit foisted into that law, by this arbitrary, fraudulent proclamation, for the first time. Such a title as *Impressment of Seamen*, was never found in any code of laws, since the first canoe was launched into the sea; not even in that of England. Whosoever claims a right must produce a law to support it.—But this proclamation attempts to transfer a pretended right of impressing seamen from their own ships, which in truth is only an enormous abuse, to the impressment of seamen from foreign nations, foreign ships and foreign subjects. The honor of this gross attempt, this affront to our understandings as well as feelings; this contempt of our natural and national resentment of injuries, as of our sympathies with fellow citizens and fellow creatures, suffering the vilest oppression under inhumanity and cruelty, could never have appeared in the world, had not the spirits of Lord Bute and Lord George Germain risen again at St. James's.

It is in vain for the Britons to say, these men are the king's subjects. How are they the king's subjects? By British laws. And what are the British laws to us, on the high seas? No more than the laws of Otaheite. We Americans must say they are our fellow citizens by our laws. They have sworn allegiance to the United States. We have admitted them to all the rights and privileges of American citizens, and by this admission have contracted with them to support and defend them in the enjoyment of all such rights. Our laws acknowledge no divine right of kings greater than those of subjects, nor any indefeasible duty of subjects more than of kings, to obedience. These remnants of feudal tyranny and ecclesiastical superstition, have been long since exploded in America. The king claims them to make them slaves. The president of the United States claims them, as it is his duty to do, by his office and his oath, not to enslave them, but to protect them and preserve them free.—Our laws are as good as British laws. Our citizens have as good a right to protection as British subjects, and our government is as much bound to afford it.—What is the impressment of seamen? It is no better than what the civilians call *Piaggiat*, a crime punishable with death by all civilized nations, as one of the most audacious and punishable of

fences against society. It was so considered among the Hebrews. "He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." Exodus 31, 17. "If a man be found stealing any of his brethren, then that thief shall die." Deuteronomy 24, 7. The laws of Athens, like those of the Hebrews, condemned the plagiary or man stealer to death; and the laws of Rome pronounced the same judgment against the same outrage. But to descend from the Hebrews, Greeks and Romans to the British. What is the impressment of seamen in England, by their own laws, in their own ports, from their own ships, within the four seas, or any where on the high seas? It is said to be an usage. So were ship-money loans and benevolences in the reign of Charles the first, and arguments were urged by his courtiers, to prove their legality, as plausible and conclusive as any that have been produced by Judge Foster, in favor of impressment. It is at best but an abuse, subsisting only by toleration and connivance, like the practice in Holland of *kidnapping* men for service or settlers in Batavia. It is in direct contradiction and violation of every principle of English liberty. It is a direct violation of Magna Charta and the fifty five confirmations of it in Parliament, and a bold defiance of all the ecclesiastical excommunications against the violators of it. It is in direct violation of all their other statutes, bills and petitions of right, as well as the Habeas Corpus act. It deprives free subjects of their liberty, property, and often of their lives, without alleging or pretending any accusation against them of any crime or fault. It deprives them of the trial by jury, and subjects them to scourges and death by martial law, and the judgments of courts martial. It is a kind of civil war, made upon innocent and unoffending subjects. It is said that in a general impressment, like that of Admiral Keppell, it costs the nation, in cutters, luggers, press-gangs, and it might have been added, in Nanny-houses and rendezvous of debauchery and corruption, an hundred pounds for every man they obtained. The practice is not avowed or acknowledged by the nation. No parliament ever dared to legitimate or sanction it. No court of law ever dared to give a judgment in favor of it. No judge or lawyer that ever I heard of, till Foster, ever ventured to give a private opinion to encourage it.

Thurlow, when he was chancellor, hazarded a saying to the committee of the city of London, that the practice of impressment of seamen was legal: but the committee answered him respectfully, but firmly, though in presence of the king in council—"we acknowledge the high authority of your lordship's opinion, but we must declare that we are of a very different opinion;" and their answer appeared to be applauded by the nation. Press gangs are continually opposed and resisted at sea, by the sailors, whenever they have the means or the least hope of escaping. Navy officers and men are sometimes killed, and there is no inquisition for their blood. As little noise as possible is made about it. It is known to be justifiable homicide to take the life of an assailant in the necessary defence of a man's liberty.—There is not a jury in England who would find a verdict of

murder or manslaughter against any sailor, on land or at sea, who should kill any one of a press gang in the necessary defence of his liberty from impressment—Press gangs on shore are often resisted by the people, fired on, some of them wounded, sometimes killed. Yet no inquisition is made for this. The practice is held in abhorrence by the men-of-war's-men themselves. The boatswain of the *Rose frigate*, after the acquittal of the four Irish sailors, who were prosecuted in a special court of admiralty at Boston, for killing a gallant and amiable officer, lieutenant Panton said, "this is a kind of work in which I have been engaged for twenty years, i. e. in fighting with honest sailors, to deprive them of their liberty; I always suspected that I ought to be hanged for it, but now I know it." Since I have alluded to this case, it may not be amiss to recollect some other circumstances of it.

A press gang from the *Rose*, commanded by lieut. Panton, with a midshipman and a number of ordinary seamen, visited and searched a merchant ship from Marblehead, belonging to Mr. Hooper, at sea. The lieutenant enquired if any English, Irish, or Scotchmen were on board? Not satisfied with the answer he received, he prepared to search the ship from stem to stern. At last he found four Irishmen retired and concealed in the forepeak. With swords and pistols he immediately laid seige to the enclosure and summoned the men to surrender. Corbett, who had the cool intrepidity of a Neilson, reasoned, remonstrated, and laid down the law with the precision of a Mansfield. "I know who you are, you are the lieutenant of a man of war, come with a press gang to deprive me of my liberty. You have no right to impress me. I have retreated from you as far as I can; I can go no farther. I and my companions are determined to stand upon our defence. "Stand off" The sailors within and without employed their usual language to each other, and a midshipman in the confusion, fired a pistol in the forepeak and broke an arm of one of the four. Corbett who stood at the entrance, was engaged in a contest of meanaces and defiances with the lieut. He repeated what he had before said, and marking a line with a *harpoon* in the salt, with which the ship was loaded, said "you are determined to deprive me of my liberty, and I am determined to defend it. If you step over *that line* I shall consider it as a proof that you are determined to impress me and by the eternal God of heaven you are a dead man." "Aye, my lad," said the lieut. "I have seen many a brave fellow before now." Taking his snuff box out of his pocket, and taking a pinch of snuff, he very deliberately stepped over the line, and attempted to seize Corbett. The latter drawing back his arm, and driving his harpoon with all his force, cut off the carotid artery and jugular vein, and laid the lieut. dead at his feet. The *Rose* sent a reinforcement to the press gang: broke down the bulk head, and seized the four Irishmen, and brought them to trial for piracy and murder. The court consisted of Governor Bernard, governor Wentworth, chief justice Hutchinson, judge Achmuty, commodore Hood himself, who then commanded all the ships of

war on the station, now a peer of the British empire, and twelve or fifteen others, councillors of Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, and Rhode-Island.—After the trial, the president of the court, Gov. Bernard, pronounced the judgement of the court, that the action of the prisoners was justifiable homicide, and in this opinion the whole court was unanimous. The sailor who was wounded in the arm, brought an action against the midshipman, and Commodore Hood himself interposed, and made compensation to the sailor, to his satisfaction after which the action was withdrawn. Such was the impressment of seamen, as it stood by law before our revolution. The author of my text then carries his courtly complaisance to the English government, farther than governors Bernard and Hutchinson, and even than Lord Hood carried it, when we were a part of the British empire. He thinks, that as every nation has a right to the service of its subjects in time of war, the proclamation of the king of Great Britain, commanding his naval officers to practice such impressments, on board, not the vessels of his own subjects, but, of the United States, a foreign nation, could not furnish the slightest ground for an embargo! It is not necessary for me to say, that any thing could furnish a sufficient ground for an embargo, for any long time; this, I leave to the responsibility of our president, senators, and representatives in congress. But, I say, with confidence, that it furnished a sufficient ground for *a declaration of war!* Not the murder of Pierce, nor all the murders on board the Chesapeake, nor all the other injuries and insults, we have received from foreign nations, atrocious as they have been, can be of such dangerous, lasting and pernicious consequence to this country, as this proclamation, if we have servility enough to submit to it.

What would the author of my text have advised? would he council the president to stipulate in a treaty with Great Britain, that his navy officers should forever hereafter have a right to visit American merchant ships, and impress from them all English, Scotch and Irish seamen? will he be so good as to explain the distinction between ships of war and merchant ships. Are not merchant ships under the jurisdiction and entitled to the protection of the laws of our country upon the high seas, as much as ships of war? is not a merchant ship as much the territory of the United States as a ship of war? would the author of my text oblige the president and congress to acquiesce in silence under this proclamation, and permit it to be executed forever hereafter? would not such a tame and silent acquiescence, as effectually, yield the point and establish the practice *if not the law*, as an express stipulation in a solemn treaty? if the United States had as powerful a navy as Great Britain, and Great Britain as feeble a force at sea, as ours, would he advise the president either to concede the principle, by treaty, or acquiesce in it, in silence? Does the circumstance of great power or great weakness make any alteration in the principle or the right? Should the captain or crew of an American merchantman, resist a British press gang on the high seas, and in defence of their liberty, kill the commander, and all under him, and then make their escape



and after returning to Salem, be prosecuted, would the writer of my text, as a judge or jurer, give his judgement for finding them guilty of murder or piracy? Although the embargo was made the watchword in our last elections, the votes in our greatest nurseries of seamen, for example, in Salem in Marblehead, in Barnstable, Sandwich, and other places on Cape Cod, in Nantucket and the Vineyard, and other places, seemed to shew, that our seamen preferred to be embargoed, rather than go to sea and be *impressed*.

No doubt, it will be said, that we have nothing to do with the question in England concerning the legality or illegality of impressments. This, as long as they confine the law and the practice to their own country, their own ships, and their own seamen, is readily acknowledged. We shall leave them to justify their own usage whether it is a mere abuse or legitimate custom to their own consciences, to their own sense of equity, humanity or policy. But when they arrogate a right and presume, in fact, to transfer their usurpations to foreign nations, or rather to Americans, whom they presume to distinguish from all other foreign nations, it becomes the interest, the right and the indispensable duty of our government, to enquire into the nefarious nature of it in England, in order to expose the greater turpitude of it, when transferred to us, as well as to oppose and resist it to the utmost of their power, and it is equally the duty of the people to support their government, in such opposition, to the last extremity.

Permit me now to enquire, what will be the effects of an established law and practice of British impressments of seamen, from American ships, upon the commerce, the navigation and the peace of the United States, *and, above all, upon the hearts and minds of our seamen.*

In considering those innumerable dangers, from winds and seas, rocks and shoals, to which all ships are exposed, in their voyages. the owner and master must sit down together, in order to determine the number of seamen necessary for the voyage. They must calculate the chances of impressment, engage a supernumerary list of sailors, that they may be able to spare as many as the British lieutenant shall please to take, and have enough left to secure the safety of the ship and cargo, above all the lives of the master and crew.—They know not how many British ships of war they may meet, nor how many sailors the conscience of each lieutenant may allow him to impress. For the lieutenant is to be judge, jury, sheriff and jailor, to every seaman in American vessels. He is to try many important questions of law and of fact.—Whether the sailor is a native of America; whether he has been lawfully naturalized in America. Whether he is an Englishman, Scotchman or Irishman; whether emigrated to America, before the revolution, or since? Indeed, *no evidence is to be admitted of any naturalization by our laws, in any of the states, since the revolution, if before.* In truth, the doctrine of the inherent and indefeasible duty of allegiance is asserted, so peremptorily, in the proclamation, that the lieut. may think it his duty

to impress every man who was born in the British dominions. It may be the opinion of this learned judge, that the connection between the king and subject, is so sacred and divine, that allegiance cannot be dissolved by any treaty the king has made, or even by an act of parliament. *And this pious sentiment may subject us all to impressment, at once.*—This however, *en passant*.

The lieutenant is to order the captain of the merchantman to lay before him a list of his crew; he is then to command the crew, to be ordered, or summoned, or mustered, to pass in review before him.—A tribunal ought to be erected. The lieutenant is to be the judge, possessed of greater authority than the chief justice of any of our states, or even than the chief justice of the United States.—The midshipman is to be clerk, and the boatswain sheriff or marshal.—And who are those lieutenants? Commonly very young gentlemen, the younger sons of wealthy families, who have procured their commissions to give them an honourable living, instead of putting them apprentices to trade, merchandise, law, physic, or divinity. Their education, their experience, their principles are so well known, that I shall say nothing of them. Lord Keppel said, that he knew that the maxim of British seamen to be, “*to do no right and receive no wrong.*” The principles of the officers I believe to be somewhat better; but, in this, they all seem to agree, officers and men, and their present ministry seem to be of the same opinion, that the world was made for the British nation, and that all nature and nations were created for the dignity and omnipotence of the British navy.

It is impossible, to figure to ourselves, in imagination, this solemn tribunal, and venerable judge, without smiling, till the humiliation of our country comes into our thoughts, and interrupts the sence of ridicule, by the tears of grief or vengeance.

“*High on a splendid seat, which far outshone*

“*Henley's gilt tub, or Flecnoe's Irish throne,*”

The lieutenant examines the countenance, the gait and air of every seamen. Like the sage of old, commands him to speak, “that he may know him.” He pronounces his ascent and dialect to be that of the Scotch, Irish, West Country, Yorkshire, Welsh, Jersey, Guernsey, Aldernay or Sark. Many native Americans are the descendants of emigrants from all these countries and retain a tincture of the language and pronunciation of their fathers and grandfathers. These will be decided to be the kings subjects. Many will be found to be emigrants or the descendants of emigrants, from Germany, Holland, Sweden, France, Spain, Portugal or Italy.—They will be adjudged by the lieutenant not to be native Americans.

They will be thought to have no friends in America, who will care enough for them to make much noise, and these will be impressed. If there should be any natives or sons of natives of any part of the West India Islands, or of any part of the East Indies, where the king is said to have thirty million of subjects, these must all be impressed, for conquest confers the indelible character of subjects, as well as birth. But if neither English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, I-

italian, German, Dutchman, Spaniard, Portuguese, East or West India man is found, the *reverend lieutenant* will think, if he is prudent enough not to say, "Jura negat sibi latta, nihil nor arrogat armis." "Our ship is so weakly manned, that we cannot fight an enemy; we cannot navigate her in safety, even in bad weather; procul a Jove, procul a fulme, I will take as many native Americans as I please. It will be long before I can be called to an account; and at last I can say that I saved the king's ship, and perhaps beat a Frenchman by the aid of this meritorious impressment, and I am sure of friends, who will not only bring me off, but obtain a promotion for me, even for this patriotic action." How many American ships and cargoes will be sunk in the sea, or driven on shore, wrecked and lost; how many masters and remaining sailors will be buried in the ocean for want of the assistance of men thus kidnapped and stolen, no human foresight can calculate.—It is, however, easy to predict, that the number must be very great. . . These considerations it seems, have no weight in the estimation of the British ministry.—Their hearts are not taught to feel another's woe. But all these things the captain and owner of an American merchant ship must take into consideration, and make the subjects of calculation before they can venture to sea. In short, there should be a corporation erected in every state for the express purpose of insuring against impressment of seamen. In a course of time and experience the chances might be calculated, so that the insurers and insured, might at a great expence be secure. But the poor sailors can never be safe.

The law must be settled, or remain unsettled. If such impressments are determined to be legal, either by treaty, or by acquiescence in the king's proclamation, it will establish in the minds of British seamen a pride of superiority and a spirit of domination, and in the minds of American seamen a consciousness of inferiority and a servile spirit of submission, that ages will not eradicate. If the question is allowed to remain undetermined, American seamen will fight in defence of their liberty, whenever they see the smallest prospect of escaping, and sometimes when there is none. They will kill and be killed. Some will be punished for their resistance on board the British men of war; and some may be carried to a British port and there prosecuted for piracy and murder. This, however, will seldom or ever be done; for I still believe there is sense and justice enough in the British nation and their juries to acquit any seamen, American or British, who should kill a press gang in defence of his liberty; but if he should escape and return to America, and be here prosecuted, I will not believe there is a judge or a juror on the continent, so ignorant of the law, so dead to every sense of justice, so abandoned to every feeling of humanity, as to find him guilty of any crime, if it were proved that he had killed a dozen press gangs in defence of his freedom. We shall have a continual warfare, at sea, like that lately at Canton. Our secretary of state's office will be filled with representations and complaints; our nation will be held in a

constant state of irritation and fermentation, and our government always distressed, between their anxiety to relieve their fellow citizens and their inability to serve them.

A republican, who asserts the duty of jealousy, ought to suspect that this proclamation was dictated by a spirit as hostile and malicious as it was insidious for the determined purpose of depressing the character of our seamen. Take from a sailor his pride and his courage and he becomes a poor animal indeed. Broken-hearted, dejected, depressed even below the standard of other men of his own level in society. A habit of *fear* will be established in his mind.—At the sight of a British man of war a *panic* will seize him; his spirits will sink, and if it be only a cutter, or a lugger, he will think of nothing but flight and escape. What but the haughty spirit of their seamen, which has been encouraged and supported for ages by the nation, has given the British navy a superiority over the navies of other nations? “Who shall dare to set bounds to the commerce and naval power of Great Britain?” is the magnificent language of defiance in parliament—and it vibrates and echoes through every heart in the nation. Every British sailor is made to believe himself the master and commander of the world. If the right of impressment is conceded by us, in theory or in practice, our seamen’s hearts will be broken—and every British seaman will say to every American seaman, as the six-nations of Indians said to the southern tribes, whom they had conquered, “*we have put petticoats on you.*” In such a case many would have too much reason to say let us no longer rejoice for independence, or think of a navy or a free commerce, no longer hope for any rank in the world but bow our necks again to the yoke of Great Britain.

If the spirit of a man should remain in our sailors, they will sometimes resist. Should a British cutter demand to search an American merchant ship, of five hundred tons burthen, armed as they sometimes are, and have a right to be—the commander of the cutter calls for a muster of the men, in order to impress such as he, in his wisdom, shall judge to be British subjects. Is it creditable that the captain and crew of the merchantman will submit to such usage—No! he will sink the boat and cutter too, rather than be insulted, and every American must applaud him for his spirit.

Is this right of impressment to be all on one side, or is it to be reciprocal? British modesty may say; ‘It is an exclusive privilege, which we claim, assert, and will maintain, because it is necessary to support our dominion of the seas, which is necessary to preserve a balance of power in Europe against France, and to prevent the French emperor from sending fifty thousand men to conquer the United States of America.’ All this will not convince American seamen. They will answer: “We think a balance of power on the ocean as necessary as on the continent of Europe. We thank you for your civility in kindly giving us hopes that you will defend us from the French army of fifty thousand men; but we are very willing to take our defence upon ourselves. If you have a right to impress seamen from our ships, we have an equal right to impress from yours.

Should one of our gun-boats meet a British East-Indiaman, armed with fifty guns. The gun-boat demands a search for American seamen, calls for the muster roll, commands the men to pass in review before him—Would the East-India captain submit?—No! he would sooner throw over-board the press gang and run down the gun-boat. Such will be the perpetual altercations between Britons and Americans at sea, and lay an immovable foundation of eternal hatred between the two nations. The king's proclamation will be found as impolitic a step as ever the court of St. James has taken.

It is said in the context, 'The British ships of war, agreeably to a right claimed and exercised for ages—a right claimed and exercised during the whole of the administrations of Washington and Adams, and of Jefferson, continue to take some of the British seamen found on board of our merchant vessels, and with them a small number of ours, from the impossibility of always distinguishing Englishmen from the citizens of the United States.' We have before seen what sort of a right to impress men from their own ships has been claimed, in what manner it has been exercised, and in what light it has been considered by the British nation. It amounts to a right of getting their officers lawfully killed. But surely no right was ever before claimed to impress men from foreign ships. If such a pretended right was ever exercised, or, in other words, if such a crime was ever committed, I presume it would be no better proof of a legal right, than a robbery, burglary, or murder, committed on shore, would prove that such actions are innocent and lawful. To argue from single facts or a few instances to a general law, is a sophistry too common with political writers, and is sometimes imputable to the compilers of the laws of nations; but none of them ever went to such extravagance as this. No claim or pretension of any right to search foreign vessels for seamen ever existed before our revolution; and no exercise of such a right ever prevailed since, except such as resemble the exercise of the right of committing robbery, burglary and murder in some of our cities. No ages have passed since our revolution. The right was never asserted or claimed, till the late proclamation of the king appeared—and that proclamation will make an epoch of disgrace and disaster to one nation or the other, perhaps to both.

From the peace of 1783, to the commencement of our government, under the present national-constitution, whenever any American seamen were impressed, they were immediately demanded in the name of the old congress, and immediately discharged, without ever pretending to such right of impressment. During the administration of Washington, whenever information was received of any impressment, immediate orders were sent to demand the men, and the men were promised to be liberated. Washington sent captain Talbot to the West Indies as an agent to demand seamen impressed on board British men of war. Talbot demanded them of the British commanders, captains and admirals, and was refused. He went then on shore, and demanded, and obtained of the chief justice of the

island. writs of Habeas Corpus, by virtue of which the impressed seamen were brought from the king's ships, and set at liberty by law, the commanders not daring to disobey the king's writ. During the administration of Adams, the secretary of state's office can show what demands were made, and the success of them. The remonstrances that were made in consequence of positive instructions, and the memorials presented at court by our minister, were conceived in terms as strong as the English language could furnish, without violating that respect and decorum which ought always to be preserved between nations and governments, even in declarations of war. The practice was asserted to be not only incompatible with every principle of justice, and every feeling of humanity—but wholly irreconcilable with all thoughts of a continuance of peace and friendship between the two nations. The effect of the memorial was, an immediate order to the commanders of the navy to liberate the demanded men. I shall say nothing of Mr. Jefferson's administration, because the negotiations already made public, sufficiently show, that he has not been behind either of his predecessors in his zeal for the liberty of the American seamen. During all this time, excuses and apologies were made, and necessity was sometimes hinted; but no serious pretension of right was advanced. No. The first formal claim was the king's proclamation. With what propriety then, can this be called a right, claimed and exercised for ages, and during the whole of the administrations of Washington, of Adams, and Jefferson?

Is there any reason why another proclamation should not soon appear, commanding all the officers of the army in Canada and Nova Scotia to go over the line, and take by force all the king's subjects they can find in our villages? The right would stand upon the same principles; but there is this difference—it would not be executed with so little danger.

## LETTER II.

SIRS,

A few words more on the subject of pressing. In strictness we have nothing to do with the question, whether impressments of seamen in England are legal or illegal. Whatever iniquity or inhumanity that government may inflict on their own subjects, we have no authority to call them to an account for it. But when they extend that power to us, a foreign nation, it is natural for us, and it is our duty as well as interest to consider what it is among themselves.

The most remarkable case in which this subject has been touched in Westminster Hall, is in Cowper's Reports, page 512. Rex. vs. John Tubbs. The report of the case is very long, and I shall only observe, that the question of the legality of the power of impressment was not before the court. The question was whether the lord

mayor had a right to exempt thirty or forty waterman for his barges. Lord Mansfield sufficiently expresses his alarm and his apprehension of the consequences of starting a question relative to this subject, in the following words: "I am very sorry that either of the respectable parties before the court, the city of London on the one hand, or the lords commissioners of the admiralty on the other, have been prevailed upon to agitate this question," &c.

"I was in hopes the court would have had an opportunity of investigating this point to the bottom, instead of being urged to discuss it so instantaneously," &c. "I own I wished for a more deliberate consideration upon this subject; but being prevented of that, I am bound to say what my present sentiments are. *The power of pressing* is founded on immemorial usage, allowed for ages—If it be so founded and allowed for ages, it can have no ground to stand upon, nor can it be vindicated or justified by any reason but the safety of the state: and the *practice* is deduced from that trite maxim of the constitutional law of England, that private *mischief* had better be submitted to, than public detriment and inconvenience should ensue. To be sure there are instances where private men must give way to the public good. In every case of pressing, every man must be very sorry for the act, and for the necessity which gives rise to it. It ought therefore to be exercised with the greatest moderation, and only upon the most cogent necessity, and though it be a legal *power*, it may, like many others, be abused in the exercise of it."

The cause is too long to transcribe; but it is worth reading. My remarks upon it shall be short.

1. Lord Mansfield most manifestly dreaded the question, probably on account of the innumerable difficulties attending it, as well as the national uproar it would most certainly excite.

2. His lordship carefully avoided the use of the word *right*. He knew the sense, force and power of words too well to profane that sacred expression by applying it to a practice so loose and undefined, so irregular and capricious, so repugnant to the inherent, hereditary, unalienable and indefeasible birth rights of British subjects.

3. He calls it a *practice* and a *power*, but he does not even venture to call it a prerogative of the crown.

4. He does not even affirm that there exists such an immemorial usage, allowed for ages. He says, "If it be so founded and allowed for ages." The existence of such an immemorial usage, allowed for ages, was probably one of the principal points he wished to investigate.

5. He does not affirm that such a custom, usage, power or practice could be pleaded or given in evidence against Magna Charta. If his lordship had been allowed time to investigate the subject to the bottom, he perhaps would not have found evidence of any such immemorial usage, allowed for ages. He certainly would not have found it *allowed* by any national act or legal authority, and without one or the other, how can it be said to have been allowed? Allowed by

whom? By those who committed the trespass, and no others. His Lordship moreover might have found, that no custom, usage, power or practice could be alledged, pleaded or given in evidence, in any court of justice against Magna Charta.

6. All the judges allow that exemptions, badges and protections against impressment have been given by peers, commons, lord mayors, lords and officers of the admiralty, and as I understand lord Mansfield, by officers of the navy. Now what a loose, undefined, arbitrary power is this to be legally established as an immemorial usage allowed for ages?

7. I wonder not that his lordship dreaded the discussion of it and an investigation of it to the bottom, for he must have foreseen the endless difficulties of ascertaining, defining and limiting the usages which were immemorial, and distinguishing them from such as were modern, temporary, usurped and not allowed.

8. The counsel for the city had before observed, that the legality of pressing, if founded at all, could only be supported by immemorial usage, there being clearly no statute in force investing the crown with any such authority.

9. The infinite difficulty of determining who were seamen and who were not, must be obvious, and all agree that the power is confined to seamen and them only.

Christian, in his edition of Blackstone, vol. 1. page 419, says, in a note—"The legality of pressing is so fully established, that it will not now admit of a doubt in any court of justice," and in proof of this he quotes Lord Mansfield's opinion in the case of the king against Tubbs, in the words I have above transcribed—Whereas I think that taking all Lord Mansfield says together, he makes the subject as doubtful as ever, and incumbered with innumerable and insuperable difficulties.

Upon the whole, all I conclude from the conduct of the modern judges and lawyers in England is, that the pride in the navy has got the better of their sense of law and justice, and that court and country lawyers, as administration and opposition, have been gradually endeavoring to unite for the last thirty or forty years, in sacrificing the principles of justice and law to reasons of state, by countenancing this branch of arbitrary power. But let them keep their arbitrary power at home, not practise them upon us, our ships, or seamen.

---

### LETTER III.

*Correspondence relative to the treaty with France.*

SIRS,

The institution of an embassy to France in 1799, was made upon principle, and in conformity to a system of foreign affairs, formed upon long deliberation established in my mind, and amply opened,



explained and supported in congress, that is a system of eternal neutrality, if possible, in all the wars of Europe, at least eighteen years before president Washington's proclamation of neutrality in 1794.—For the truth of the antiquity of this system I appeal to judge Chase, who made the first motion in congress for entering into foreign relations. This motion was made in concert with me and seconded by me.—If I am incorrect in any circumstances, that gentleman can set me right. And here I feel a pride in acknowledging, that perhaps, no two members of congress were at that time upon more intimate terms. We flickered, disputed, and wrangled in public and private, but always with a species of good humour that never was suffered to diminish the confidence, esteem, or affection of either in the other. I have long wished for an opportunity of transmitting to posterity my humble testimony to the virtues and talents of that able and upright magistrate and statesman.

Our system was to form treaties of commerce with France, Spain, Holland and all the other nations of Europe, even with England herself, upon a footing of entire equality; but by no means to form any political or military connection with any power in Europe, or engage in any hostilities against any, unless driven to them by necessity in support of our independence and honour, or our just and necessary interests. In what manner and by whose means this plan has ever been abandoned in any degree I could detail from step to step, but it would require a volume and is not necessary here. It has never been forgotten by me, but the rectitude and wisdom of it has been confirmed by every years and days experience from 1776 till 1798, and indeed till 1809.

This introduction will be called pompous no doubt, and it will be thought an astonishing instance of the bathos, to descend from judge Chase to Mr. Logan, but my plan requires it.

With this system clear in my head, and deeply impressed on my heart, it was with the utmost reluctance that I found myself under the necessity in 1798, of having recourse to hostilities against France. But the conduct, of that government had become so unjust, arbitrary and insolent as become intolerable. I therefore animated this nation to war; determined however to listen to every proposal, and embrace the first opportunity to restore peace whenever it could be done consistent with the honor and interests of the country. In this spirit I gave all due attention and consideration to Gen. WASHINGTON's and Mr. BARLOW's Letter, nor was I wholly inattentive to a multitude of other circumstances, some of which shall be mentioned.

Perhaps at no period of our connection with France has there ever been such a flood of private letters from that country to this, as in the winter 1798 and 1799. The contents of many of them were directly or indirectly communicated to me.—They were all in a similar strain with that of Mr. Barlow, that the French government had changed their ground, and were sincerely disposed to a negotiation and accommodation. I will instance only two. Mr. CODMAN, of Boston, wrote largely and explicitly to his friends to the same purpose, and

his worthy brother, the late Mr. JOHN CODMAN, of Boston, not only communicated to me the substance of his brother's letter, but thanked me in warm terms for opening a negotiation; and added, that every true friend to this country, who was not poisoned with party spirit, would thank me for it, and support me in it.—Mr. NATHANIEL CUTTING, a Consul in France under president Washington's appointment, and a sensible man, wrote almost as largely as Mr. Barlow and to the same effect.

I shall conclude this letter with another anecdote. Mr. Logan of Philadelphia, a gentleman of fortune and education, and certainly not destitute of abilities, who had for several years been a member of the legislature of Pennsylvania, and has since been a senator of the United States, though I knew he had been one of the old constitutional party in that state, and a zealous disciple of that democratical school which has propagated many errors in America and perhaps many tragical catastrophies in Europe, went to France, either with the pretext or real design of improving his knowledge in agriculture and seeing the practice of it in that country. I had no reason to believe him to be a corrupt character, or deficient in memory or veracity. After his return he called upon me, and in a polite and respectful manner informed me that he had been honoured with conversations with Talleyrand, who had been well acquainted with me, and repeatedly entertained at my house, and now visited me at his request to express to me the desire of the directory, as well as his own, to accommodate all disputes with America, and to forget all that was past; to request me to send a minister from America, or to give credentials to some already in Europe, to treat; and to assure me that his minister would be received, and all disputes accommodated in a manner that would be satisfactory to me and my country. I know the magical words democrat and jacobin were enough to destroy the credibility of any witness with some people, but not so with me. I saw marks of candour and sincerity in this relation which convinced me of its truth.

But the testimonies of Mr. Codman, Mr. Cutting, Mr. Barlow, and Mr. Logan, and all other private communications, though they might convince me in my own mind would have no influence to dispose me to nominate a minister if I had not received authentic, regular, official, diplomatic assurances which may be sent you in another letter.

---

## LETTER IV.

SIRS,

From Mr. Murray, the American minister at the Hague, who had been appointed by President Washington, I received assurances from the French government similar to those in Mr. Barlow's letters and so many others. They were conveyed from the French

directory to Mr. Pichon, secretary of legation and charge des affaires of the French Republic near the Batavian Republic, in the absence of the French Ambassador, by him officially communicated to Mr. Murray, and by him to the executive of the United States. The communication was in these words :

## [TRANSLATION.]

## EXTERIOR RELATIONS.

*Third Division.*

## LIBERTY EQUALITY.

(N. B. The good order of the correspondence requires, the answer should relate the number of the division above indicated.)

*French seal of the Department of Exterior Relations.*

PARIS, the 7th Vendamaire, of the 7th year of the French Republic, one and indivisible.

*The minister of Exterior Relations to Citizen Pichon, Secretary of Legation of the French Republic, near the Batavian Republic.*

I have received, successively, citizen, your letters of the 22d and 23d Fructidore. They afford me more and more reason to be pleased with the measures you have adopted to detail to me your conversations with Mr. Murray. These conversations, at first merely friendly, have acquired consistency, by the sanction I have given to them by my letter of the eleventh Fructidore. I do not regret that you have trusted to Mr. Murray's honor a copy of my letter. It was intended for you only, and contains nothing but what is conformable to the intentions of government. *I am thoroughly convinced that should explanations take place, with confidence between the two cabinets, irritation would cease ; a crowd of misunderstandings would disappear ; and the ties of friendship would be more strongly united, as each party would discover the hand which sought to disunite them.* But I will not conceal from you that your letters of the 2d and 3d Vendamaire, just received, surprize me much. What Mr. Murray is still dubious of, has been very explicitly declared even before the President's message to Congress, of the 3d Messidore (21st of June) last, was known in France. I had written it to Mr. Gerry, namely on the 24th Messidore and the 4th Messidore. I did repeat it to him before he sat out. A whole paragraph of my letter to you of the 11th Fructidore, of which Mr. Murray has a copy, is devoted to developpe still more the fixed determination of the French Republic. According to these bases you were right to assert that *whatever plenipotentiary the government of the United States might send to France to put an end to the existing differences between the two countries would be undoubtedly received with the respect due to the representative of a free, independent and powerful nation.* I cannot persuade myself, citizen, that the American government need any further declarations from us to induce them. in order to renew the negotiations, to adopt such

measures as would be suggested to them, by their desire to bring the differences to a peaceable end. If misunderstandings on both sides have prevented former explanations from reaching that end, it is probable that these misunderstandings being done away, nothing henceforth, will bring obstacles to the reciprocal dispositions.

The president's instructions to his envoys at Paris, which I have only known by the copy given you by Mr. Murray, and received by me the 21st Messidore, (9th July) announce, if they contain the whole of the American government's intentions, and dispositions, which could only have added to those which the directory has always entertained; and notwithstanding the posterior acts of that government, notwithstanding the irritating and almost hostile measures they have adopted, *the Directory* has manifested its perseverance in the sentiments which are deposited both in my correspondence with Mr. Gerry, and in my letter to you of the 11th Fructidore, and which I have herein before repeated in the most explicit manner. Carry, therefore, citizen to Mr. Murray, those positive expressions, in order to convince him of our sincerity, and prevail upon him to transmit them to his government.

I presume citizen, that this letter will find you at the Hague; if not, I ask it may be sent back to you at Paris.

Salute and fraternity.

(Signed)

CH. MAU. TALLEYRAND.

This letter was transmitted by Mr. Murray to the American government, and I own I am not acquainted with any words either in the French or English language, which could have expressed in a more solemn, a more explicit, or a more decided manner, assurances of all that I had demanded as conditions of negotiation. How could I get rid of it with honor or even without infamy? If ever there was a diplomatic communication, this was one. The diplomatic organs were all perfect and complete. Mr. Pichon was well known at Philadelphia, where he had resided some years in a public employment in the family of the French ambassador, as a respectable man and a man of letters—He was now secretary of legation, held a commission from his sovereign as much as a minister plenipotentiary; and every secretary of legation, in the absence of his principal minister, is, of course, *charge des affaires*; and the acts of a *charge des affaires* are as official, as legal and authentic, as those of an ambassador extraordinary.

In what other manner could M. Talleyrand have transmitted the assurances demanded? He had communicated them to Mr. Gerry, but was desirous of sending them by another way, that he might increase the chances of their arrival. At war with England, he could not send them to Mr. King. If he had sent them to Madrid to Col. Humphreys, there was no probability of their arriving in America so soon as through Holland. If he had sent them to Berlin, to Mr. Adams, the course would have been still more circuitous, and the probability much greater of long delay and uncertain arrival. If he

had sent them to Mr. Smith, at Lisbon, there would have been the same difficulties. Of all the diplomatic organs, therefore, in Europe, he chose the best, the shortest, the safest, and the most certain.

Mr. Gerry's letter to the Secretary of State, dated Nantasket-Road, October the 1st, 1798, confirmed these assurances beyond all doubt, in my mind, and his conversations with me, at my own house, in Quincey, if any thing further had been wanting, would have corroborated the whole. As I have not a copy of that gentleman's letter, if he should chance to read this paper, I ask the favor of him to publish copies of his letter and of Mr. Talleyrand's letters to him; and, if he pleases, to repeat the assurances he gave me in conversation.\* This gentleman's merit in this transaction was very great. They have been treated like all his other sacrifices, services and sufferings in the cause of his country.

If, with all this information, I had refused to institute a negotiation or had not persevered in it after it was instituted, I should have been degraded in my own estimation as a man of honor, I should have disgraced the nation I represented, in their own opinion, and in the judgment of all Europe.

*\*To Messrs. Everett and Munroe, Editors of the Boston Patriot.*

GENTLEMEN,

His excellency, Mr. Adams, late president of the United States, having expressed in the Boston Patriot of yesterday, a desire that I would publish copies of my letter to the secretary of state, dated Natasket Road, October 1, 1798, and of the letters of M. Talleyrand to myself, together with his assurances communicated by me to the President, in conversation; in compliance with the President's request, I now send you the copies referred to, and shall transmit the "assurances" in time for publication.

Your obedient servant,

E. GERRY.

Cambridge, 27th April, 1809.

*Extracts from the letter of Mr. Gerry to Timothy Pickering, Esq. Secretary of State, dated Nantasket Roads, 1st Oct. 1798.*

When I left the United States in August, 1797, the citizens in general appeared to be earnestly desirous of a reconciliation with France, on terms consistent with the honor, interest, and welfare of the two republics; these, being free from claims and controversies in regard to territory, boundaries, and many matters which embroil states; and from competitions relative to their productions, manufactures, and commerce, had a mutual and manifest interest in the renewal of their commercial and friendly intercourse with each other. Nature seemed to have entitled the United States, in their remote situation, to the peaceable pursuit of their industry, by means whereof, in its various branches, their wealth and power were rapidly increasing: and to an exemption from the conflicts of Europe; which, involving them, would check their population, drain their resources, and ensure their poverty. On a candid investigation then of the causes of the unhappy differences between the two governments, on a disposition to correct errors, to which all governments are more or less liable, and on their mutual resolution to reciprocate justice, the success of the mission was conceived to depend; and as this temper marked the plan of pacification adopted by the government of the United States, there was a rational prospect of success.

## LETTER V

SIRS,

When I had received that authentic act of the sovereign authority of France, a copy of which is inserted in my last letter to you, communicated by their secretary of state, through their secretary of legation and charge des affaires and our minister at the Hague, fully complying with all my requisitions, upon mature deliberation I determined to nominate a minister to France. Some of the commu-

On the 26th of July, I left Paris; and from the best information which I could obtain relative the disposition of the Executive Directory (for I never had any direct communication with them) they were very desirous of a reconciliation between the republics. Every impediment to my departure had been adopted by the French minister; and he would have prevented it, had he succeeded in his plan of an epistolary discussion; his object was, as I conceive, to gain time for ascertaining, whether the United States were then disposed to a treaty; of this he manifested doubts, being persuaded that their resentment was too great to admit of it. He seemed also to apprehend, that in consequence of the incredible exertions of Great Britain, and the unequivocal evidence she had given of her ability to defend herself, they were inclined to avenge their injuries, by an alliance with her; and that should France come forward with overtures, or the plan of a treaty, she would fail therein, and compromise her honor. I was nevertheless of an opinion, that should France be just and liberal in her measures, the government of the United States would meet her on the ground of accommodation. My judgment was the result of their instructions; for I had never received any other official intelligence since my departure from America; I have therefore uniformly inculcated that sentiment.

Having been thus in a situation, wherein, amidst a series of events, each has been productive of fresh embarrassments, I have invariably pursued what to me appeared the honor, interest, and welfare of my country, and been guided by the sense of the government, as far as I could ascertain it.

If the door is still open to peace, the establishment of it must be an happy event to the United States, as it will exempt them from calamities, which notwithstanding delusive appearances will, with short intervals, probably continue for half a century, to exhaust and depopulate Europe.

*Extract from the letter of Ch. Mau. Talleyrand, to Mr. Gerry, envoy of the United States, dated Paris, July 22, 1793.*

You repeat to me that the government of the United States has always been disposed to terminate amicably the differences which subsist between the two republics. This fresh assurance at a time when hostile demonstrations have just been made, could not but temper their effect. But let a frank, candid and truly amicable act, speedily realize those dispositions. Far from entering into the answers of the President to the addresses which have been presented to him from different parts of the United States, whatsoever they may be, I would fain behold in his expressions, nothing but a political expedient. I do not thence judge less favorably of the true intentions, which you profess in his name, and I would not have engaged you to warrant the success of the first proof, which he will render of them, if the Executive Directory, which was ready to receive you, had not made a fixed determination upon the subject. A negotiation may therefore be resumed even at Paris, where I flatter myself you have observed nothing but testimonies of esteem, and where every envoy who shall unite your advantages, cannot fail to be well received. Moreover, I know not, sir, why you tell me that it would be requisite to lop off from this negotiation

nications from France had been accompanied with intimations concerning the characters proper to be employed, which I thought exceptionable; and that they might be made a pretext for again rejecting a minister.—I considered moreover, that France was an undulating ocean in a violent storm; party had exterminated party, and constitution had succeeded constitution, as billow rolls and roars, froths and foams after billow in the gulf stream. I knew, that in the nature of things, an executive authority in five persons could

every preliminary respecting a loan, and explanations on the subject of the speeches delivered. Be pleased to read over again the propositions which I transmitted to you on the 30th Prarial, (June 18) they contain all the ideas of the French government; and you will not find in them a word which justifies your recurring to those two questions. An odious intrigue had got possession of them—the dignity of the French government could not permit this mixture; and it did not wish that views as pure as its own should be associated therewith hereafter. As to the preliminary measures, which you suggest, sir, the government has already anticipated your desire. By information which it has just received, it indeed learns that violences have been committed upon the commerce of the United States in the West Indies, and on their coasts. Do it the justice to believe, that it needs only to know the facts to disavow all acts contrary to the laws of the Republic, and its own decrees. A remedy is preparing for it, and orders will soon arrive in the West Indies, calculated to cause every thing to return within its own just limits, until an amicable arrangement between France and the United States shall re-establish them respectively in the enjoyment of their treaties

—  
*To Mr. Gerry, Envoy of the United States:*

Presuming, sir, that you have not yet embarked, I address to you a decree of the Executive Directory, wherein you will find a part of the measures which I announced to you the fourth of this month. Its solicitude will not be confined to that. Neutrals, in general, will have reason soon to be convinced of its firm attachment to the principles to which it is desirous that all the maritime nations might agree. It depends upon the U. States particularly to cause every misunderstanding immediately to disappear between them and the French Republic.

Accept, Sir,

the assurance of my perfect consideration,

(Signed)

CH. M. TALLEYRAND.

—  
*Extract from a memorandum containing the substance of a conference with the Dutch Minister, the 25th July, 1798.*

Just before dinner, the Dutch minister called upon me, and said he had received from Mr. Talleyrand, a printed copy of his letter to me dated 24th Messidor (12th July) that the Dutch government took a friendly part in the disputes between France and the U. States, and that he came to offer his services, and the mediation of his government, who had authorised and instructed him on this head.

I answered, that the conduct of M. Talleyrand in publishing his letter to me, had an hostile appearance; that if a mediation could be supposed necessary, it must be offered to the government of the United States; I had no authority to accept it: that if the government of France was sincere in its declaration, made through M. Talleyrand its minister, all that was wanting was to open a negociation; for he had expressed a desire to show by treaty how well

not last long in France or any where else :—and we were already informed that the directory was divided into parties, three against two, and that the majority in the legislative assembly adhered to the two, and the minority to the three. A revolution then was to be expected, and the new government might not feel themselves bound by the assurances given by their predecessors. To avoid the possibility of these inconveniencies I provided as cautiously and effectually against them as I could, in my message to the senate, which never has been published. If this message had been made public, with its contents, the public dispatch from France, I have confidence enough in the candor of the nation, to believe that it would have obviated many a silly and many a malicious criticism. It was in these words.

*Gentlemen of the Senate.*

I transmit to you a document which seems to be intended to be a compliance with a condition mentioned at the conclusion of my message to congress, of the 21st. of June last.—Always disposed and ready to embrace every plausible appearance of tranquility, I nominate William Vans Murray, our minister resident at the Hague, to be minister plenipotentiary of the United States, to the French republic. If the senate shall advise and consent to this appointment, effectual care shall be taken in his instructions that he shall not go to France without direct and unequivocal assurances from the French government, signified by their minister of foreign relations, that he shall be received in character : shall enjoy the privileges attached to his character by the law of nations ; and that a minister of equal rank, title and powers shall be appointed to treat with him, to discuss and conclude all controversies between the two republics, by a new treaty.

JOHN ADAMS.

In this manner effectual provision was made against any and every possible and insidious use, of the insinuations concerning characters proper to be employed, and who would be likely to succeed.—In this manner also, provision was made against the possible, and indeed highly probable, and fully expected revolution in the French government. Mr. Murray was not to advance one step towards Paris, from the Hague until after he should have received from the French government, whatever it might be, a repetition of assurances, officially communicated, that he in person should be received.

When this message was received in senate, it was postponed, as the greatest part of executive business usually was, for considerati-

---

disposed France was to put an end to these disputes ; that the government of the United States was so reasonable and just in its demands, that it could not fail to evince a good disposition to a reconciliation : that the etiquette of settling on foot a negotiation appeared at present to be the only embarrassment :—more especially as the principal objection to a negotiation had ceased, this government having relinquished all claims of loans and reparations on account of the President's speeches.



on. A great clamour was raised among the members of the House of Representatives, and out of doors, and an abundance of squibs, scoffs and sarcasms in what were then called the federal newspapers, particularly Cobbet's Porcupine, and John Ward Fenno's United States Gazette.—And by whom were these written? as I was informed, by Macdonald, the Scottish British commissioner for adjusting the claims of British creditors, and by William Smyth, the British agent for claimants before that board of commissioners, of whom Macdonald was one. There were other writers besides these—but I will not condescend to name any others at present. It was given out that John Ward Fenno, was the writer of the most important of them, and he was represented as a masterly writer, possessed of a most eloquent pen. *But the pen was not his.*

This was not all. Something much more serious to me soon took place. A committee of the senate called upon me whether appointed on record, or whether by private concert, I knew not. I was distressed because I thought the procedure unconstitutional. However I was determined that not one disrespectful word should escape me concerning the senate or any member of it, and to that resolution I carefully adhered; and in relating the conference with those honorable gentlemen, which shall appear in my next letter, the same decorum shall be observed.

---

## LETTER VI.

SIRS.

The gentlemen of the senate informed me, that they came to confer with me on the subject of the nomination of Mr. Murray to France; that there was a considerable dissatisfaction with it, and they desired to know for what reason I had preferred Mr. Murray to so many others abroad and at home. My answer to the gentlemen was, that I thought Mr. Murray a gentleman of talents, address and literature, as well as of great worth and honor, every way well qualified for the service, and fully adequate to all that I should require of him, which would be a strict compliance with his instructions, which I should take care to provide for him on all points in terms that he could not misunderstand. That my motives for nominating him in preference to others, were simply because the invitation from the French government had been transmitted through him, and because he was so near to Paris, that he might be there in three or four days, and because his appointment would cause a very trifling additional expence.

They then enquired why I had not nominated Mr. King? I answered that if Mr. King had been in Holland, I should not have thought of any other character. But he was our ambassador in England, then at war with France, and it would be considered by France

as an insult, to send them an ambassador, who as soon as he had accomplished his business, was to return to England and carry with him all the information he might have collected in Paris. That the French government would suspect me of a design to send them a spy for the court of St. James. That I presumed Mr. King at that time would not be pleased to be removed from England to France, for perpetuity or permence. Besides, that the difficulty of communication between England and France, would necessarily occasion an indefinite delay in procuring the necessary passports, and that much depended upon the promptitude and dispatch with which the negociation should be conducted.

The gentlemen asked why I had not nominated our minister plenipotentiary at Berlin?—Neither the remarks with which they accompanied this question, nor the reasons which I gave them in answer, need to be detailed to the public.

I added, gentlemen I maturely considered all these things before I nominated Mr. Murray; and I considered another gentleman, whom you have not mentioned, Mr. Humphries, at Madrid; but the same objections of distance and delay account in his case as well as that of Mr. Adams. The gentlemen all agreed that there would have been no advantage in nominating him more than Mr. Murray.

The gentlemen then enquired why I had not nominated a commission of three or five in preference to a single gentleman. The answer was that I had a long experience of ten years in this kind of business, and had often acted in commissions with various other gentlemen, and I had been three times commissioned alone. That I had found in general that business could be better done by one than by many, in much less time and with much less perplexity. That the business to be done by Mr. Murray would be nothing more than obedience to his instructions, and that would as well be performed by one as by three. That the delay must be great in sending gentlemen from America, and the expence greatly augmented. That very much depended upon the celerity of the enterprize.

The gentlemen thought that a commission would be more satisfactory to the senate and to the public. I said although this was not perfectly consonant to my opinion, I could in such a case give up my own to the public, and if they advised it, I would send another message and nominate a commission of three; but Mr. Murray would be one, for after having brought his name before the public, I never would disgrace him by leaving him out. The gentlemen acquiesced, and one of them, whom I took to be their chairman, was pleased to say, "after this very enlightened explanation of the whole business, I am perfectly satisfied." The others appeared to acquiesce, and took their leave. The next morning I sent another message, which shall appear in my next letter.

## LETTER VII.

SIRS,

The message mentioned in my last letter, was in these words:—  
*Gentlemen of the Senate,*

The proposition of a fresh negotiation with France, in consequence of advances made by the French government, has excited so general an attention and so much conversation, as to have given occasion to many manifestations of the public opinion, from which it appears to me, that a new modification of the embassy will give more general satisfaction to the legislature and to the nation, and perhaps better answer the purposes we have in view. It is on this supposition, and with this expectation, that I now nominate Oliver Ellsworth, Esq. Chief Justice of the United States, Patrick Henry, Esq. late Governor of Virginia, and William Vans Murray, Esq. our minister resident at the Hague, to be Envoys extraordinary and ministers plenipotentary to the French republic, with full powers to discuss and settle by a treaty all controversies between the United States and France. It is not intended that the two former of these gentlemen will embark for Europe, until they shall have received from the executive directory assurances signified by their secretary of foreign relations, that they shall be received in character, that they shall enjoy all the prerogatives attached to that character by the law of nations, and that a minister or ministers of equal powers shall be appointed and commissioned to treat with them.

JOHN ADAMS.

To these nominations the Senate advised and consented, and commissions were prepared. My friend Mr. Henry declined, on account of his age, and governor Davie, of North Carolina, was appointed in his place. During all this transaction, no motion was made in Senate, to pass a resolution that a mission from France was inexpedient. With the dispatches from Talleyrand before his eyes, I believe no member of the Senate would have been willing to record his name in favour of such a resolution, among the yeas and nays.—The deputation of Senators made no remonstrances to me against the mission, or the deplomatic communications on which it was founded, but only against the missionary, Mr. Murray.

I sent an invitation to the heads of departments to assemble in my chamber, to consult upon the instructions to be given to our envoys. They all meet me accordingly, and in several long evenings entered into a very serious and deliberate discussion of every article that was to be demanded, and, insisted on in the proposed treaty. They were all unanimously agreed upon to my entire satisfaction, and reduced to writing. I committed them to the secretary of state, to be reduced into proper form, to have a fair copy made and transmitted to me for revision, correction or signature, as there might be occasion.

E

The yellow fever was expected, and we were all obliged to fly for our lives; myself and all my family to Quincy and the heads of departments, with the public offices to Trenton.

I had repeatedly endeavoured to impress on the mind of the secretary of state, the necessity of transmitting to me as soon as possible, his draught of the instructions, that they might be finished and signed, and every thing prepared for the departure of the envoys. I waited with much concern, expecting from day to day to receive the instructions; but no instructions appeared. At length, instead of them, I received a letter signed by all five of the heads of departments earnestly entreating me to *suspend the mission!*

I was astonished at this unexpected, this obstinate and persevering opposition to a measure, that appeared so clearly to me to be so essential to the peace and prosperity of the nation, and the honour of the government, at home and abroad. I was not a little surprised at the unanimity of the heads of departments, for two of them had always appeared moderate and candid in relation to this mission— My instantaneous determination was to go to Trenton, meet the gentlemen face to face, to confer with them coolly on the subject and convince them, or be convinced by them, if I could. On my way, I called upon chief justice Ellsworth, at his seat in Windsor, and had a conversation of perhaps two hours with him. He was perfectly candid. Whatever should be the determination, he was ready at an hour's warning to comply. If it was thought best to embark immediately, he was ready. If it was thought more expedient to postpone it for a little time, though that might subject him to a winter's voyage, that danger had no weight with him. If it was concluded to defer it till the spring, he was willing to wait. In this disposition I took leave of him. He gave me no intimation that he had any thought of a journey to Trenton. I lodged at Hartford, not yet purified of the yellow fever, and there I caught something very like it, or at least almost as bad, a violent cold, attended with a constant fever, which rendered me for six weeks more fit for a chamber and a bed of sickness, than for uncomfortable journeys, or much labor of the head or hands. However, I would not consent to be retarded on my journey, and reached Trenton, where Mr. Hamilton had arrived a few hours before me. Governor Davie had been there some time. Ill as I was, I sent for the heads of departments.—Four of them were there. The attorney general was gone to Virginia. Many days were employed in conferences with them, sometimes at my own apartments, and sometimes at their offices.

The inhabitants of Trenton had been wrought up to a pitch of political enthusiasm that surprised me. The universal opinion appeared to be, that the first arrival from Europe would bring the glorious news, that Louis the eighteenth was restored to the throne of France, and reigning triumphantly at Versailles. Suwarrow, at the head of his victorious Russian army, was to have marched from Italy to Paris, on one side, and prince Charles at the head of an Austrian army, was to have marched from Germany to Paris on the other, and detach-

ments from both armies were to march down to Havre to receive the king, who was to be brought over by a British fleet and escorted with flying colours to Versailles. I could scarcely believe my own senses when I heard such reveries.—Yet the heads of departments appeared to believe them, and urged them as decisive arguments for suspending the embarkation of our envoys till the spring. In vain did I urge the immense distances the two imperial armies had to march, the great number of towns and cities in the route of both, in positions chosen with great skill, fortified with exquisite art, defended by vast trains of heavy ordnance, garrisoned by numerous troops of soldiers perfectly disciplined and animated with all the obstinacy and ardor of the revolutionary spirit. In vain did I alledge the military maxim, which would certainly govern both Prince Charles and Suwarrow, that is, *never to leave a fortified city in the rear of your army, in possession of your enemy.* That the siege of one town would consume the whole season.—That neither the Russians nor Austrians were probably provided with the mortars and heavy cannon necessary for sieges. Nothing would do—Louis the XVIII. must be upon the throne of France.—Well, suppose he is, what harm will there be in embarking our envoys? They will congratulate his majesty, and if his majesty cannot receive them under their credentials to the French republic, he will be glad to see them in his kingdom, and assure them of his royal protection till they can write home for fresh commissions, and such shall be ready for them at a minute's warning. In vain did I urge the entire change of property in France, and the necessity the present possessors were under to defend themselves at every sacrifice and every risque. Mr. Ellsworth had arrived in two or three days after me. I invited him and governor Davie to dine with me alone, that we might converse with entire freedom. At table, Mr. Ellsworth expressed an opinion somewhat similar to that of the heads of departments and the public opinion of Trenton. Is it possible, chief justice, said I, that you can seriously believe that the Bourbons are or will be soon restored to the throne of France? Why, said Mr. Ellsworth, smiling, *it looks a good deal so.* I should not be afraid to stake my life on it, that they will not be restored in seven years, if they ever are, was my reply. And then I entered into a long detail of my reasons for this opinion. They would be too tedious to enumerate here, and time has superceded the necessity of them.

The result of the conversation was, that Mr. Davie was decidedly for embarking immediately, as he always had been from his first arrival, and Mr. Ellsworth declared himself satisfied and willing to embark as soon as I pleased.

Mr. Hamilton, who had been some time in town and had visited me several times, came at last to remonstrate against the mission to France. I received him with great civility, as I always had done from my first knowledge of him. I was fortunately in a very happy temper and very good humour. He went over the whole ground of the victories of Suwarrow and Prince Charles, and the inflexible deter-

mination of the two imperial courts, in concert with Great Britain to restore the house of Bourbon to their kingdom. That there was no doubt the enterprise was already accomplished, or at least it would be, before the end of the campaign. That Mr. Pitt was determined to restore the house of Bourbon to their kingdom. That the confidence of the nation in Mr. Pitt was unbounded. That the nation was never so united, and determined to support Mr. Pitt, and his resolution to restore the monarchy of France. His eloquence wrought the little man up to a degree of heat and effervescence, like that which general Knox used to describe of his conduct in the battle of Monmouth, and which Gen. Lee used to call his *peroxyms* of bravery, but which he said would never be of any service to his country. I answered him in general, as I had answered the heads of departments and Judge Calvert, but to no purpose. He repeated over and over again the unalterable resolution of Mr. Pitt, and the two imperial courts—and the invincible heroism of Suwarrow and Prince Charles, and the unbounded confidence of the British empire in Mr. Pitt, with such agitation and violent action, that I really pitied him instead of being displeased. I only added, that I differed with him in opinion on every point, and that instead of restoring the Burbons, it would not be long before England would make peace. I treated him throughout with great mildness and civility; but after he took leave, I could not help reflecting in my own mind on the total ignorance he had betrayed of every thing in Europe, in France, England and elsewhere—Instead of that unbounded confidence in Mr. Pitt, I knew that the British nation had been long working up almost a ripeness for rebellion against Mr. Pitt for continuing the war. Accordingly it was not long before Mr. Pitt was obliged to resign, peace at Amiens was made, and Napoleon acknowledged.—Mr. Hamilton in his most famous pamphlet has hinted at this conversation, and squinted at my simplicity for expecting peace.

Upon the whole I directed the instructions to be prepared—the heads of departments were assembled and the instructions deliberately considered paragraph by paragraph, and unanimously approved by me, and by them. Indeed there had never been any difference of opinion among us on any article of the instruction.

The instructions were presented to the envoys and they requested to embark in the United States frigate as soon as possible. For some cause or other in the state of the ship, they landed in Spain and went by land from Corunna to Paris, on the same route which Dana and I had travelled twenty years before, that is, in 1780. Before their arrival a revolution had occurred, and the consular government succeeded the directory.

Had Mr. Murray's nomination been approved, he would probably have finished the business long before, and obtained compensation for all spoliations.

## LETTER VIII.

SIRS,

At first I intended to encumber your paper with no documents but such as were absolutely necessary for my own vindication. But as the peace with France in eighteen hundred was not only an event of great importance in itself, but produced demonstrations of the prejudices, passions, views, designs, and systems of parties, more perhaps than any other; I hope you will allow me room for such other papers as may throw light upon this subject. At present it may not be very interesting, but the cause of truth and justice may hereafter be promoted by having the facts and evidences laid together in a series. The future policy of the nation will not be injured by it.

Besides the communications already published from the sovereign of the French nation, through their minister of foreign relations, their diplomatic organ at the Hague, and our minister there, another was communicated through the same channels in these words :

*Copy of a letter dated Paris, 11th Fructidor, 6th year, (August 28, 1798) from Mr. Talleyrand, as minister of Exterior Relations, to Mr. Pichon, secretary of legation, Hague.*

## [TRANSLATION.]

I see with pleasure, citizen, that the intercourse of society has procured you some political conversation with Mr. Murray. I entertain an esteem for that minister. Like all the men at the head of the affairs of the United States he has received the impressions which the British cabinet has known how to give against us. He thinks the measures of his government just, and supports them: but he possesses reason, understanding, and a true attachment to his country; he is neither French nor English: he is ingenuously an American. I am not at all surprised that he has appeared to you to wish sincerely for the reconciliation of the two republics. I will therefore cheerfully answer the questions you put to me, on different points, which appeared to you not to be well established in his mind. I do not see between France and the United States any clashing of interest, any cause of jealousy. The Americans wish to be fishermen, sailors, manufacturers, and especially husbandmen. In all these points of view their success is more at the expence of England than us. Why should we be uneasy about them? They aspire to the consolidation of their national existence, and it is to our purpose that they should succeed. In fact, we should have decided upon very superficial views, to sustain their independence, if the matter was to separate them from England, merely to leave them finally insulated among themselves on an extensive sea coast, weak, rivalling and impoverished by each other, and torn by foreign intrigues. We know that Great Britain would soon have put together

piece by piece those scattered shreds, and we should have done nothing useful for ourselves, if so miserable a chance of it were not daily rendered more remote.

What, therefore, is the cause of the misunderstanding, which, if France did not manifest herself more wise, would henceforth induce a violent rupture between the two republics? Neither incompatible interests nor projects of aggrandizement divide them. After all, distrust alone has done the whole. The government of the United States has thought, that France wanted to revolutionize it. France has thought that the United States wanted to throw itself into the arms of England. It does not require much skill to divine, which is the cabinet interested in the two events producing each other, and which invisibly puts in motion all the expedients calculated to make them take effect. Let us open our eyes on both sides. I am disposed to admit that the conduct of the government of the United States may be explained by other causes than those heretofore presumed. But let it on its part, understand, that the French government, wounded as it may be, is too wise to entertain the views of disturbance, which the other supposes. It concerns a republic, founded on the system of representation, to support and not weaken similar establishments. The stability of this system abroad is a necessary example at home. France, in fine, has a double motive as a nation, and as a republic, not to expose to any hazard, the present existence of the United States. Therefore, it never thought of making war against them, nor exciting civil commotions among them: and every contrary supposition is an insult to common sense.

These fundamental principles being established, it is natural to ask by what fatality a good understanding was not long since restored? It was because irritation being mingled with distrust, neither party yielded to a conciliatory inclination. In the United States it was supposed that the French government was temporizing in order to strike the blow with greater certainty; whence resulted a crowd of measures more and more aggravating. In France it was supposed that the government of the United States, wished only the appearances of a negotiation, whence resulted *a certain demand for pledges of good faith.*

Let us substitute calmness for passion, confidence for suspicions, and we shall soon agree. I used my endeavors to enter upon a negotiation in this spirit with Mr. Gerry. My correspondence with him, until the day of his departure is a curious monument of advances on my part, and of evasions on his. It is wrong to think that I confined myself to vague protestations. Among the series of official letters, which will doubtless be published at Philadelphia, I select one of the 30th Prairial, wherein you will see that I made very positive propositions, without any mixture of preliminary conditions. This letter was followed by three notes upon the articles to be discussed, and I intended to complete the others in this manner, if Mr. Gerry had not refused to answer thereto.



When it became necessary to abandon the idea of treating with that envoy, who thought it important only to know how a negotiation might thereafter be resumed, I gave him the most solemn assurances concerning the reception that a new plenipotentiary would receive. It was far from my thoughts to insinuate that the president should send one from the United States, instead of investing with his powers some one who was in Europe; far less that the envoy should land directly in France, instead of announcing it in a neighboring country. I wished merely to say that the executive directory was so decided for a reconciliation, that all tampering would be superfluous, that an act of confidence in it would excite its own. I should be very badly understood, if there should be found in my expressions, a restriction on the nature of the choice which the president might make. I wished to encourage Mr. Gerry by testimonies of regard, that his good intentions merited. Although I could not dissemble that he wanted decision at a moment when he might have easily adjusted every thing. It does not thence follow that I designated him; I will even avow that I think him too irresolute to be fit to hasten the conclusion of an affair of this kind. The advantages that I prized in him are common to all Americans, who have not manifested a predilection for England. Can it be believed that a man who should profess a hatred or contempt of the French republic, or should manifest himself the advocate of royalty, can inspire the directory with a favorable opinion of the dispositions of the government of the United States? I should have disguised the truth, if I had left this matter ambiguous: it is not to wound the independence of that government, to point out to a sincere friend of peace, the shoals he ought to avoid.

As to the mediation of the Batavian Republic and of Spain, I do not know that there is any serious question about it, and it appears to me absolutely useless. The United States might hesitate, in the present state of things, to refer themselves to their impartiality, and besides I see no subject which may not be arranged directly.

I know that the distance which separates France and the United States opens a vast field for incident, and there have been but too many of them. But the executive directory is unshaken in the conduct which may best obviate them. The excess even of provocation has deadened their effect—The government of the United States surrounds itself with precautions against an imaginary attack. To stretch the hand to defuded friends, is what one republic owes to another, and I cannot doubt that the dignity of that attitude will convince the president of our pacific dispositions.

The two governments ought above all to be attentive to indirect attempts to alienate them still more. Their prudence will secure this object, and I will cite but one example of it. You have told Mr. Murray the truth respecting Dr. Logan. But I perceive that on all hands it is attempted to produce a belief in America, that we are negotiating with him. On the 7th of this month a very insidious paragraph was inserted in the "Bien Informé." It is therein intimated,

that guided by the citizen Thomas Paine, Dr. Logan has made application to the executive directory, in the character of secret agent. The doctor has complained of it bitterly to me. He has no need of justifying himself concerning a matter, the falsity of which I knew better than any body; but he assured me that having once met Thomas Paine, at the house of a third person, he found him so prejudiced against the United States, and so opinionative with respect to an influence he neither possesses among them nor us, that he abstained from conversing any more with him. Moreover, to cut short all misunderstanding, I engaged Dr. Logan to postpone, till another time, the experiments he proposes to make on agriculture, and to return home. As to Mr. Hitchborn, of Massachusetts, I was even ignorant till now that he was in Europe. A single word will suffice for the rest.

We want nothing but justice on the part of the United States: we ask it: we offer it to their government: it may depend upon the candor of the executive directory.

You will no doubt perceive, citizen, that I approve of the communications which your zeal has caused you to seek with Mr. Murray, since I enable you to resume them with official elucidations, &c. &c. &c.

#### CH. MAU. TALLEYRAND.

This and all the other communications from the French minister, heretofore published in my letter to you, were produced by my message to congress of the 21st of June, 1798, which was in these words:

*Gentlemen of the Senate, and*

*Gentlemen of the House of Representatives,*

While I congratulate you on the arrival of Gen. Marshall, one of our late envoys extraordinary to the French republic, at a place of safety, where he is justly held in honor, I think it my duty to communicate to you, a letter received by him from Mr. Gerry, the only one of the three who has not received his conge. This letter, together with another from the minister of foreign relations to him, of the 3d of April, and his answer of the 4th, will show the situation in which he remains, his intentions and prospects.

I presume, that before this time he has received fresh instructions, a copy of which accompanies this message, to consent to no loans, and therefore the negotiation may be considered at an end.

I will never send another minister to France, without assurances that he will be received, respected, and honored, as the representative of a great, free, powerful and independent nation.

JOHN ADAMS.

United States, June 21st, 1798.

In my next letter you will have the evidence of the compliance of the French government with the conditions and requisitions in my message to the Senate, nominating Mr. Murray and other ministers and envoys to France.

## LETTER IX.

SIRS,

On the sixth of March a letter was written by the secretary of state, by my order, in the following words, to Mr. Murray ;—

*Philadelphia, March 6, 1799.*

SIR,

I enclose a commission constituting you, in conjunction with the Chief Justice Elsworth, and Patrick Henry, Esq. of Virginia, envoys extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary to the French Republic. By the President's direction I enclose for your information copies of his messages to the Senate of the 18th and 28th March ; (it should have been the 18th and 25th of February) by the latter of which you will see the motives inducing the nomination of a commission for the purpose of negociating with France, instead of resting the business wholly with you. This will doubtless be agreeable, by relieving you from the weight of a sole responsibility in an affair of such magnitude.

It is the President's desire, that you by letter to the French minister of foreign relations, inform him ' that Oliver Elsworth, chief justice of the United States, Patrick Henry, late governor of Virginia, and yourself, are appointed envoys extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary of the United States to the French Republic, with full powers to discuss and settle by a treaty, all controversies between the United States and France.'—But ' that the two former will not embark for Europe until they shall have received from the Executive Directory direct and unequivocal assurances, signified by their secretary of foreign relations, that the envoys will be received in character, to an audience of the Directory, and that they shall enjoy all the prerogatives attached to that character by the law of nations, and that a minister or ministers of equal powers shall be appointed and commissioned to treat with them.'

The answer you shall receive to your letter, you will be pleased to transmit to this office.

You will also be pleased to understand it to be the president's opinion that no more indirect and inofficial communications, written or verbal, should be held with any persons whatever, agents on behalf of France, on the subjects of differences between the United States and the French Republic. If the French government really desires a settlement of existing differences, it must take the course pointed out—unless the executive directory should prefer sending a minister plenipotentiary to the United States.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

TIMOTHY PICKERING.

*Wm. VANS MURRAY, Esq.*

*Minister of the United States, at the Hague.*

F

Mr. Murray obeyed these instructions by a letter in these words :

*The Hague, 5th May, 1799.*

CITIZEN MINISTER,

It is with the greatest pleasure that I hasten to fulfil the instruction which I just had the pleasure to receive from the government of the United States of America, by informing you that the President has appointed Oliver Elsworth, chief justice of the United States, Patrick Henry late governor of Virginia, and William Vans Murray, minister resident of the United States at the Hague, to be envoys extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary of the United States to the French Republic, with full power to discuss and settle by a treaty, all controversies between the United States and France ; but that the two former, Mr. Elsworth and Mr. Henry, will not embark for Europe until they shall have received from the Executive Directory, direct and unequivocal assurances, signified by their minister of foreign relations, that the envoys shall be received in character to an audience of the directory, and that they shall enjoy all the prerogatives attached to that character by the law of nations, and that a minister or ministers of equal powers shall be appointed and commissioned to treat with them.

I request you, citizen minister, to lay this subject before your government, and as the distance is so great and the obstacles so numerous in an Atlantic voyage, that you will favor me, as speedily as possible, with the answer which is to lead to such happy and important consequence.

Accept, Citizen Minister, the assurances of my perfect high esteem.

(Signed)

WM. V. MURRAY,

*To the Citizen TALLEYRAND,*

*Minister of the Exterior Relations of the French Republic, &c. &c. Paris.*

When Mr. Murray received the answer of the French minister, he enclosed it, (with the following letter from himself,) to the secretary of state—

*The Hague, 7th of May, 1799.*

DEAR SIR,

On the fifth I addressed precisely, agreeably to your instructions, as I conceived, the enclosed letter to Mr. Talleyrand, the minister of exterior relations. You will perceive, sir, that I did not think myself at liberty to go, not only not out of the commas, but beyond them. In one word alone I deviate, in the word minister, instead of secretary of foreign relations. No direct nor indirect and inofficial communications, written or verbal, will be held by me with the French agents on American affairs.

I accept the appointment which it has pleased the president to clothe me with, under a grateful sense of the high honor conferred upon me, so unexpectedly, by this mark of his confidence. I may

be allowed to say, that though I was deeply sensible of the honor conferred by the first nomination, and shall always, I hope, retain a most grateful recollection of it; yet, sir, the new modification of that nomination gave me great pleasure, always conceiving, as I thought I did, that my negotiation would be full of anxieties and political perils to the envoys that should be employed by our government. I had no wish to be engaged in it, and no expectation that I should be: To have a share in it was by me unsought: you will excuse this declaration, because I was instrumental in certain preliminary steps relative to the advances of France which produced the basis of the appointment.

I sent the original of the enclosed to Mr. Talleyrand, by post; another, a copy, to Major Mountflorece, to be handed to him; a third to Mr. Griffith for Major M. in case the other failed, to be opened by Mr. G. if Maj. M. should have been out of Paris, and directed Mr. G. to follow the instructions which he would find in the letter to Maj. M. which were to deliver the enclosed to Mr. Talleyrand, and take his letter in answer for me, and send it to me.

As soon as I have the answer of the directory, I shall have the honor of transmitting copies to you, sir, by different ways.

I am, with the greatest respect, and sincere esteem, dear sir, faithfully, your most obedient servant,

WILLIAM V. MURRAY.

*The Hon. Timothy Pickering, Esq.*

*Secretary of State of the United States of America.*

—  
PARIS, 23 Floreal, (12th May, 1799,) 7th year of the French Republic, one and indivisible.

*The Minister of Exterior Relations,*

To Mr. Wm. Vans Murray, minister resident of the United States, at the Hague.

I augur too well, sir, from the eagerness you display in fulfilling the instructions of your government, not to hasten to answer the letter I received from you, dated the 15th of this month.

The executive directory being informed of the nomination of Mr. Oliver Elsworth, of Mr. Patrick Henry, and of yourself, as envoys extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary of the United States to the French Republic, to discuss and terminate all differences which subsist between the two countries, sees with pleasure, that its perseverance in pacific sentiments has kept open the way to an approaching reconciliation. It has a long time ago manifested its intentions with respect to this subject. Be pleased to transmit to your colleagues and accept yourself, the frank and explicit assurance, that it will receive the envoys of the United States, in the official character with which they are invested: that they shall enjoy all the prerogatives which are attached to it by the law of nations, and that one or more ministers shall be authorised to treat with them.

It was certainly unnecessary to suffer so many months to elapse for the mere confirmation of what I have already declared to Mr. Gerry, and which, after his departure, I caused to be declared to you at the Hague. I sincerely regret that your two colleagues await this answer at such a distance. As to you, sir, whom it will reach in a few days, and who understand so well the value of time, when the restoration of harmony between the two republics which every thing invites to friendship, is in question, be assured that as soon as you can take in hand the object of your mission, I shall have the honor immediately to send you passports.

Accept, sir, the assurances of my very sincere consideration,  
 (Signed) CH. MAÜ. TALLEYRAND.

The foregoing documents were not published till they were communicated to congress with my message of December 5th, 1799. The messages to the senate nominating the minister and the envoys were never published till now, as I remember. I may be, however, mistaken. These papers were not published until the mischief was done that they might have prevented, and innumerable prejudices and errors propagated all over the nation.

I have omitted two facts which ought to have been inserted] in a former letter :

1. One is, that one of the heads of department at Trenton was more diffident than the rest. He said he was far from being sanguine. He had signed the letter to me, urging a postponement of the mission because he did not like to be singular ; but he wished me to decide the question according to my own judgment and sentiments. He also shewed me a letter from the attorney general in Virginia, saying that the people expected that the envoys should proceed, and would be disappointed if they did not.

2. Another fact is that I transiently asked one of the heads of department whether Elsworth and Hamilton came all the way from Windsor and Newark to Trenton, to convince me that I ought to suspend the mission ?

## LETTER X.

SIRS,

Mr. Hamilton, in the famous pamphlet, page 13, says, "the conduct pursued bore sufficient marks of courage and elevation to raise the national character to an exalted height throughout Europe."

"Much is to be deplored that we should have been precipitated from this proud eminence, without necessity, without temptation."

It is the habitual practice of our parties, to affirm or deny, as they find it to their purpose, the honour or disgrace that is produced in

Europe by our measures. But neither party know any thing about the matter. The truth is, that our affairs are much less spoken or thought of, in Europe, than we imagine. In all parts of Europe, but especially in France and England, they are constantly misrepresented and misunderstood.—Most men of all in England. I will venture to say, that Mr. Hamilton wrote entirely at random, and without a glimmering of genuine information, when he mentioned both the exaltation and precipitation of our national character. To appeal to the courtiers or cabinet, or to the diplomatic corps in Europe, would be idle; because none of them will read Hamilton's pamphlet or those papers. But I would not hesitate to submit the whole subject to any of them. Chief justice Ellsworth is no more. I can no longer appeal to him. If I could, I would say no more than the truth but it would be no more than I shall now say; and I aver that this representation to me was the direct reverse of Hamilton's dogmatical assertions. Governor Davie still lives, and to him I appeal with confidence. He declared to me that to judge of the conduct of the American government, both in her naval and other preparations for war, and their political and diplomatic negotiations upon that occasion, a man must go to Europe, where it was considered as the greatest demonstration of genius, firmness and wisdom. If I represent the governor's expressions in stronger terms than those he used, I request him to correct them.

In England, I know the Anti-Jacobin Journal abused us, and so did Macdonald, Cobbett, Smith, and every Briton in Europe and America, who wished us at war with France and alliance with England. But even in England all the sober part of the nation applauded us, and that to such a degree, that it soon became a popular cry, "we must imitate the United States of America, change our ministers, and make peace." Accordingly they did soon change their ministers and make peace at Amiens.

Mr. Liston, whose character I respect, had run through a long course of diplomatic experience in various courts and countries in Europe, from a secretary of legation and charge des affaires to the grade of Minister plenipotentiary, and thence to that of ambassador to Constantinople, was probably a better judge than Mr. Hamilton, who had no experience at all in any diplomatic station, and who, I dare say, had read very little on the subject of diplomatic functions, and still less of the history of embassies or of the printed dispatches of ambassadors. Mr. Liston, if any body, knew what would procure honour to a nation or government, and what disgrace; what could raise the dignity, or what depress it; what was triumph, and what humiliation.

Now I affirm, that the first time Mr. Liston saw me after he had been informed of the communications of the French directory, through Talleyrand, Mr. Alchon [and Mr. Murray, he said to me these words—'To what humiliations will not those Frenchmen stoop, to appease you? I own, I did hope they would have gone to war with you.' I smiled, but made no answer. I wanted no proof of

the sincerity of this declaration. I doubted not the sincerity of his wish, more than I did that of Mr. Canning and his associates in the Anti Jacobin, who, upon receiving the news of Mr. Murray's nomination, proclaimed that Jacobinism was triumphant and carrying all before it in America. They could not, or would not, distinguish between jacobinism and neutrality. Every thing with them was jacobinism, except a war with France and an alliance with Great Britain. They all panted for a war between the United States and France as sincerely, though not so ardently, as Alexander Hamilton.

There was not wanting insinuations and instigations to me, to confer with Mr. Liston on the subject of an alliance with Great Britain. And Mr. L. himself repeatedly suggested to me, in very modest and delicate terms, however, his readiness to enter into any explanations on that head. I always waved it with as easy a politeness as I could.—But my system was determined, and had been so for more than twenty years, that is, to enter into no alliance with any power in Europe. In case of a war with England, I would not enter into any alliance with France. In case of a war with France, I would not form any alliance with England. We want no alliance: we are equal to all our own necessary wars.

'Non tali auxilio, nec nefensionibus istis, tempus eget.' We might aid and be aided by a power at war with our enemy, and might concert operations from time to time; but I would take no engagement that should tie up our hands from making peace whenever we pleased. Had the war with France continued, I might have been drawn by the force of public opinion, or the influence of the legislature, into an alliance with England; but it would have been against my own judgment and inclination.

Let me conclude this letter with an anecdote. Dr. Franklin told me, that before his return to America from England, in 1775, he was in company, I believe at Lord Spencer's, with a number of English noblemen, when the conversation turned upon fables, those of Æsop, La Fontaine, Gay, More, &c. &c. &c. Some of the company observed that he thought the subject was exhausted. He did not believe that any man could now find an animal, beast, bird or fish, that he could work into a new fable with any degree of success; and the whole company appeared to applaud the idea, except Franklin, who was silent. This gentleman insisted on his opinion. He said, with submission to their lordships, he believed the subject was inexhaustible, and that many new and instructive fables might be made out of such materials. Can you think of one at present? If your lordship will furnish me a pen, ink, and paper, I believe I can furnish your lordship with one in a few minutes. The paper was brought, and he sat down and wrote:—

Once upon a time, an eagle sailing round a farmer's barn, and espying a hare, darted down upon him like a sun beam, seized him in his claws, and re-mounted with him in the air. He soon found that he had a creature of more courage and strength than a hare, for which, notwithstanding the keenness of his eye sight he had mistaken a cat.



The snarling and scrambling of the prey was very inconvenient, and what was worse, she had disengaged herself from his talons, grasped his body with her four limbs, so as to stop his breath, and seized fast hold of his throat with her teeth. Pray, said the eagle, let go your hold and I will release you. Very fine, said the cat, I have no fancy to fall from this height and be crushed to death. You have taken me up, and you shall stoop to set me down. The eagle thought it necessary to stoop accordingly. The moral was so applicable to England and America, that the fable was allowed to be original and highly applauded.

Let Hamilton say what he will, the French directory found it convenient to stoop and set us down on our honest ground of neutrality and impartiality, as the English did our eagle formerly, and now does a second time.

---

## LETTER XI.

SIRS,

Another of my crimes, according to my great accuser, page 28, was nominating Mr. Murray, without previous consultation with any of my ministers. To this charge I shall say but little at present.

In England the first magistrate is responsible for nothing; his ministers for every thing: Here, according to the practice, if not the constitution, the ministers are responsible for nothing; the president for every thing.—He is made to answer, before the people, not only for every thing done by his ministers, but even for all the acts of the legislature: Witness the alien and sedition laws. In all great and essential measures, he is bound by his honor and his conscience, by his oath to the constitution, as well as his responsibility to the public opinion of the nation, to act his own mature and unbiassed judgment, though unfortunately it may be in direct contradiction to the advice of all his ministers. This was my situation in more than one instance. It had been so in the nomination of Mr. Gerry; it was afterwards so in the pardon of Fries. Two measures that I recollect with infinite satisfaction, and which will console me in my last hour.

In the case now in question, I perfectly knew the sentiments of all my ministers. I knew every argument they could allege, and moreover I knew the secret motives that governed them, better than they did themselves. I knew them then, and I know them now: hereafter the world will be convinced of it.

I knew if I called the heads of departments together, and asked their advice, three of them would very laconically protest against the measure. The other two would be loath to dissent from their brethren, and would more modestly and mildly concur with them. The consequence would be that the whole would be instantaneously com-

municated to A, B, C, D, E, F, &c. in the senate, and to G, H, I, &c. in the house of representatives; the public and the presses would have it at once, and a clamor raised and a prejudice propagated against the measure, that would probably excite the senate to put their negative on the whole plan. If I had called the heads of departments together, and asked their advice, I knew from past experience, that their answers would have been flat negatives. If I had asked their reasons, they would be such argument as Hamilton has recorded, for he, it seems, was their recording secretary 1, The etiquette which required, according to them, that France should send a minister to us. 2. That a negotiation with France would give offence to Great Britain and to Russia, and probably involve us in a war with these powers. I had twenty times answered these arguments, by saying there was no such etiquette. It was true that in ancient and more barbarous times, when nations had been inflamed by long wars, and the people wrought up to a degree of fury, on both sides, so as to excite apprehensions that ambassadors would be insulted or massacred, by the populace, or even imprisoned as in Turkey, sovereigns had insisted that ambassadors should be exchanged, and that one should be held as a hostage for the other. It had even been insisted that a French ambassador should embark at Calais at the same time that an English ambassador embarked at Dover. But these times were passed. Nations sent ambassadors now as they pleased. Franklin and his associates had been sent to France; Mr. Jay had been sent to Spain; I had been sent to Holland; Mr. Izard had been commissioned to Tuscany; Mr. W. Lee to Vienna and Berlin, without any stipulation for sending ministers in return. We had a minister in London three years, without any minister from England in return. We have a minister at Berlin, without any from Prussia.

As to the offence that would be taken by Great Britain, I asked, shall we propose any thing to France, or agree to any thing inconsistent with our treaties and pledged faith with England? Certainly not. What right has England, then, to be offended? Have we not as clear a right to make peace as she has? We are at war with France, at least in part. If Britain should make peace with France, what right have we to complain, provided she stipulates nothing inconsistent with her treaty with us?

As to Russia, what has she to do with us, or we with her? I had confidence enough in the assurances given, firmly to believe that our envoys would be received and respected. Candidates enough were ready to run the risque, and Hamilton himself would have been very proud to have been one of them, if he had not been commander in chief of the army.

I will acknowledge that when the terror of the power and anger of Great Britain have been held up to me, in a manner that appears to me to be base and servile, I sometimes was provoked to say, that in a just cause, when the essential character and interests of the United States should be wronged by Great Britain, I shall hold her

power in total contempt. It may be said, for it has been said, that this was imprudent, and that I was fretted. Let it be said by whom it will, I now repeat the same sentiment, after the coolest reflection of ten years.

On the other hand, by making the nomination on my own authority, I believed that the heads of departments would have some discretion, and although I knew that the British faction would excite a clamor, and that some of the senators, representatives and heads of departments would make no exertions to discountenance it, if they did not secretly or openly encourage it: yet I was so perfectly convinced of the national sense, and that the senate felt it so strongly, that they should not dare to negative it, even if the majority had disliked it, which I very well know they did not. I thought a clamor after the fact, would be much less dangerous than a clamor before it. And so it proved it in experience. A clamor there was, as I always knew there would be, and Alexander Hamilton had a principal underhand in exciting it.

It is well known that there are continued interviews between the members of the Senate and the members of the House, and the heads of departments. Eternal solicitations for nominations to office, are made in this manner. There is not an executive measure that members of congress are not almost constantly employed in pumping from the heads of departments. There is not a legislative measure that the heads of departments do not intermeddle in. It really deserves consideration whether it would not be better that heads of departments should be members of the legislature. There they would be confronted in all things. Now all is secrecy and darkness. Washington I know was nearly as much vexed and tortured by these things as I was, and resigned his office to get rid of them. And so would I have done with great joy, if I could have been sure of a successor whose sentiments were as conformable to mine, as he knew mine were to his.

---

## LETTER XII.

SIRS,

Mr. Hamilton, in his pamphlet, page 28, speaking of Talleyrand's dispatches, says, "overtures so circuitous and informal, through a person who was not the regular organ of the French government for making them, to a person who was not the regular organ of the American government for receiving them, &c. were a very inadequate basis for the institution of a new mission."

Here, again, Mr. Hamilton's total ignorance or oblivion of the practice of our own government, as well as the constant usage of other nations in diplomatic proceedings, appears in all its lustre. In 1784 the congress of the United States, the then sovereign of our

country issued fifteen commissions, as I remember—if I mistake the number Col Humphreys can correct me, for he was secretary of legation to them all, and possesses, as I suppose, the original parchment—to John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, to form commercial treaties with all the commercial powers of Europe, and the Barbary states. Our instructions were to communicate these credentials to the ambassadors of these powers at Versailles, not to go to those courts. And we did communicate them in this informal and circuitous manner, and received very civil answers. We were not told, if congress wishes any connection with us, commercial or political, let them send ambassadors directly to our courts. It is inconsistent with our dignity to receive, or pay any attention to such indirect, circuitous, and informal overtures.

These indirect and circuitous communications, as Hamilton calls them, are of established usage and daily practice all over the world. Instances of them without number might be quoted. I shall only recite two or three.

The Baron de Thulemier, ambassador from Frederick the Great, king of Prussia, whose name and character Mr. Hamilton affects to admire, wrote me a letter when I was minister plenipotentiary in Holland, informing me that he had received the commands of the king his master, to make me a visit, and communicate something to me as minister from the United States of America, and desired to know at what hour I would receive him. I wrote him in answer that I would have the honor of receiving him at twelve o'clock of the next day, or if he wished an earlier interview I would call on him, at his hotel, at any hour he should be pleased to indicate. To this I received no answer, but at the hour I had mentioned, his excellency appeared at my house, in the habiliments and with the equipage of his ministerial character. He said that the king, his master, had ordered him to visit me and ask my opinion of a connection and treaty between Prussia and the United States of America. What a figure should I have made, if I had said, this is all circuitous and informal. Your master, if he wishes a connection, commercial or political with America, must send an ambassador to Philadelphia, and propose it to congress; yet Mr. Hamilton's doctrine and reasoning would have required this. The king however would have expected more sense of propriety, more knowledge of the intercourse of nations, and a more rational answer from a deputy of one of our savage tribes, or one of the migratory hordes of Africa or Tartary.— My answer was, be pleased, sir, to present my profound respects to his majesty, and inform him, that though I have no commission or instructions to enter into official conference upon the subject, I am very sensible of the high honor done me by this communication and have no hesitation in expressing my private opinion, that such a connection between the United States and his majesty's dominions would be highly honorable and advantageous, and I had no doubt congress would be unanimous in the same sentiments. That without loss of time I would transmit to them an account of this con-

versation, and had no doubt they would authorise a minister to treat with his majesty's minister. The Baron then said he was farther directed to ask my opinion of a proper basis of a treaty. I answered, our treaty lately concluded with Holland would in my opinion be such a basis.

Congress, when they received this information from me, did not say, this is all informal and indirect; from obscure and unauthorised agents; the King of Prussia must send an ambassador. Yet I sent them no official act of the king; no official letter under hand and seal from his prime minister, as Mr. Murray did to me. All was mere parol evidence; mere verbal conversation. Yet Congress immediately sent a commission to Adams, Franklin and Jefferson, to treat with the King's minister. The king sent a commission to his minister, and a treaty was negotiated, concluded and ratified, which now remains among the archives and printed documents of our country, not at all to her disgrace.

The king had previously ordered his ambassador to express to me his entire satisfaction with the interview between his ambassador and me; that he had maturely examined our treaty with Holland and approved it as a basis of negotiation with him.

Another instance.—Mr. Weems, a young gentleman of liberal education from Virginia or Maryland, went to England in hopes of obtaining holy orders in the church. He wrote a letter to me, as American minister in Holland, though he had never seen me, and indeed has never since seen me, bitterly complaining not only of the stern refusal, but even of the rough treatment he had received from the English bishops, and even from the great Hurd. He desired to know if he could receive ordination from the bishops in Holland. There were no bishops in Holland; but there were Protestant bishops in Denmark. At the first meeting of the ambassadors, I asked Mr. De Saint Saphorin, the ambassador from Denmark, whether an American candidate for the ministry could receive from the bishops in his country episcopal ordination; and whether any oaths, subscriptions, or professions of faith would be required; and whether the articles of the church of England were sufficiently conformable to the faith of Denmark?—"Mon Dieu! Je n'en sais rien"—My God! says St. Saphorin, I know nothing of the matter; but if you desire it, I will soon inform myself. I thanked him, and should be much obliged to him. In a shorter time than I could imagine he came to inform me that he had written our conversation to the prime minister of his court, who had laid it before the king, who had taken it into consideration in his council—and had ordered it to be laid before the convocation—who had unanimously determined that any American candidate of proper qualifications and good moral character should at any time receive ordination from any bishop in Denmark, without taking any oath, or professing any faith, but merely subscribing the articles of the church of England. He even went so far as to say that the king, if we desired it, would appoint a bishop in one of his islands in the West Indies to accommodate American candi-

dates. I wrote this to Mr. Weems, and it soon procured him a more polite reception from the English clergy. Indeed it laid the first foundation not only of Mr. Weems' ordination, but of the whole system of episcopacy in the United States.

I also wrote a history of it to congress, who instead of reprimanding me, ordered me to transmit their thanks to the king of Denmark, which I did afterwards, through another indirect and informal channel, that of his ambassador at the court of London.

It seems that neither St. Saphorin, nor his prime minister, nor the king their master, nor his council, nor the whole convocation of bishops, nor our American congress were such profound adepts in the law of nations and the diplomatic intercourse of sovereigns, as Mr. Hamilton. None of them discovered that it was inconsistent with their dignity to take notice of any thing less formal and direct than immediate communications from a resident ambassador.

Let me add another example. At the instigation of the Count de Vergennes, the Swedish ambassador at Versailles had written to his court to know whether it would be agreeable to them to form a treaty with the United States. Receiving an answer in the affirmative, he suggested this to Dr. Franklin, who upon this simple verbal insinuation, wrote an account of it to congress, who immediately sent him a commission. The king of Sweden sent a commission to his ambassador at Versailles. The treaty was concluded at Paris, and afterwards ratified by both powers. Yet no ambassador from Sweden to the United States has ever appeared, and no minister from the United States has ever gone to Sweden to this day.

---

## LETTER XIII.

SIRS,

In  *pamphlet*, page 27, it is said that the great alteration in public opinion had put it completely in the power of our executive to control the machinations of any future public agent of France.—Therefore Philadelphia was a safer scene of negotiation than Paris.

Mr. Hamilton's erroneous conception of the public opinion may be excused by the considerations that he was not a native of the United States: that he was born and bred in the West Indies, till he went to Scotland for education, where he spent his time in a seminary of learning, till seventeen years of age: after which no man ever perfectly acquired a national character;—then entered a college at New York, from whence he issued into the army as an aid de camp. In these situations he could scarcely acquire the opinions, feelings, or principles of the American people. His error may be excused by the further consideration, that his time was chiefly spent in his pleasures, in his electioneering visits, conferences and correspondences—in propagating prejudices against every man whom he thought

his superior in the public estimation ; and in composing ambitious reports upon finance, while the real business of the treasury was done by Duer, by Wollcott, and even, for some time and in part, by Tenche Coxe.

His observation, that "France will never be without secret agents," is true—and it is equally true that England will always have secret agents and emissaries too. "That her partizans among our citizens can much better promote her cause, than any agents she can send," is also true—but it is at least equally true of the partizans of Great Britain. We have seen in the foregoing papers, glaring and atrocious instances of the exertions of her public agents, secret emissaries, and partizans among our citizens. But none have yet been mentioned that bear any comparison, in point of guilt and arrogance, with those of all kinds that have been exhibited within the last two or three years.

My worthy fellow-citizens !—Our form of government, inestimable as it is, exposes us more than any other to the insidious intrigues and pestilential influence of foreign nations. Nothing but our inflexible neutrality can preserve us.—The public negotiations and secret intrigues of the English and the French have been employed for centuries in every court and country in Europe. Look back to the history of Spain, Holland, Germany, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Prussia, Italy and Turkey, for the last hundred years.—How many revolutions have been caused ! How many emperors and kings have fallen victims to the alternate triumphs of parties, excited by Englishmen or Frenchmen ? And can we expect to escape the vigilant attention of politicians so experienced, so keen sighted, and so rich ? If we convince them that our attachment to neutrality is unchangeable, they will let us alone : but as long as a hope remains in either power, of seducing us to engage in a war on his side and against his enemy, we shall be torn and convulsed by their manœuvres.

Never was there a grosser mistake of public opinion, than that of Mr. Hamilton. The great alteration in public opinion had not then, nor has it yet, taken place. The French republic still existed : The French people were still considered as struggling for liberty, amidst all their internal revolutions, their conflicts of parties, and their bloody wars against the coalitions of European powers. Monarchy, empire, had not been suggested. Bonaparte had appeared only as a soldier ; had acted on the stage in no civil or political employment. A sense of gratitude, for services rendered us in our revolution, by far more sincere and ardent than reason or justice could warrant, still remained on the minds not only of our republicans. but of great numbers of our soundest federalists. Did Mr. Hamilton recollect the state of our presses ? Recollect the names and popular eloquence of the editors of the opposition papers ? That scoffing, scorning wit, and that caustic malignity of soul which appeared so remarkably in all the writings of Thomas Paine and Callender, which to the disgrace of human nature, never fails to command attention

and applause? The members of the Senate and the House, who were decidedly against the administration, their continual intercourse and communications with French emissaries? The hideous clamor against the alien law, and sedition law, both considered as Jewelled entirely against the French and their friends, and the surrender according to the British treaty of the Irish murderer Nash, imposed upon the public for Jonathan Robbins? Did he recollect the insurrection in Pennsylvania. The universal and perpetual inflammatory publications against the land tax, stamp tax, coach tax, excise law, and eight per cent loan? Did he never see nor hear of the circular letters of members of congress from the middle and southern states? Did he know nothing of the biting sarcasms, the burning rage, against himself and his own army? Did he know nothing of a kind of journal that was published of every irregular act of any officer or soldier, of every military punishment that was inflicted, under the appellation of the Cannibal's progress? Did he see nothing of the French cockades ostentatiously exhibited against the American cockades?

Had a French minister been seen here with his suite, he would have been instantly informed of every source and symptom of discontent. Almost every Frenchman upon the continent, and they were then numerous in all the states, would have been employed in criminating the American government, in applauding the condescension of the French directory, and the friendly, conciliating disposition of the French nation. Nothing could have been kept secret; the popular clamor for peace on any terms would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to resist. The multitude in Philadelphia, as it was, were almost as ripe to pull me out of my house as they had been to dethrone Washington in the time of Genet. Even the night of the fast day, the streets were crowded with multitudinous assemblages of people, especially that before my door, and kept in order only, as many people thought, by a military parol, ordered, I believe, by the governor of Pennsylvania.

In these circumstances, it was my opinion, and it is so still, it was infinitely better to conduct the negociation at Paris than in Philadelphia. But if this was and is an error, it was certainly not of such consequence as Hamilton thought fit to represent it. If it was an error, I humbly conceive it would have better become Mr. Hamilton to have been silent, than to endeavor to make it unpopular—since the step was taken and irrevocable, when he wrote.

But the real truth is, he was in hopes, as well as Mr. Liston, that the French government would neither send a minister here nor receive one there—in short, that they would have gone to war with us. If we had waited for a minister here, much time would have been lost: our little naval force under Talbot, Truxton, Decatur, Little, &c. was doing wonders in protecting our commerce, and fighting and capturing French ships of war. Some of our citizens were not wanting in irritating expressions of exultation and triumph, particularly in parading a French national ship that had been captur-



ed by Decatur up the Delaware, in sight of all the citizens of Philadelphia, with the French national colours reversed under our American flag. Hamilton hoped that such provocations would produce an irreconcilable breach and a declaration of war. He was disappointed and lost the command of his army. *Hinc illæ Lacrimæ.*

There were other circumstances of more serious and solid importance, indicative of public opinion, which Mr. Hamilton, if he had been a vigilant and sagacious statesman, could not have overlooked. The venerable patriarchs Peddleton and Wythe, of Virginia, openly declaimed for peace; the former came out in print with his name, protesting against a war with our sister republic of France. General Heath came out with an address to the public in Massachusetts, declaring that every man he met was decidedly for peace. When the election was coming on, the legislature of Massachusetts dare not trust the people either at large or in districts, to choose electors, but assumed that office themselves. In New York, the great interest and vast bodies of people, who are supposed to follow or direct the two great families of Clintons and Livingstons, aided by all the address and talents of Aaron Burr, was decidedly for peace with France. In Pennsylvania, Governor M'Kean, with his majority of thirty thousand votes, or in other words at the head of the two vast bodies of Germans and Irish, reinforced by great numbers of English presbyterians, quakers and anabaptists, were decidedly against a war with France.

After enumerating all these symptoms of the popular bias, it would be frivolous to enlarge upon the conversations of which I was informed at taverns and insurance offices, threatening violence to the president by pulling him out of his chair, upon the French cockades that were every where paraded before my eyes, in opposition to the black cockade, or upon the declarations and oaths, which I know were made by no small numbers, that if we went to war with France, and the French should come here, they would join them against the federalists and the English. These things I recollect with grief, because they do no honor to our country: but I must say they disgrace it no more than many more solemn actions and declarations of the opposite party against France, and in favor of England, have done within the last twelve months.

In these circumstances, it was the height of folly to say as Hamilton says, that it would have been safer to negotiate at Philadelphia than at Paris. As to our ambassador's being overawed in Paris, by any finesse of politicians, or triumphs of the French arms: We must take care to send men who are equal to such trials. The French have not, as yet, gained any great and unjust advantages of us by all their policy. Our envoys were precisely instructed. Every article was prescribed that was to be insisted on as an ultimatum. In a treaty they could not depart from a punctillio. A convention they might make, as they did, at their own risque.—But the president and senate were under no obligation to ratify it. Had it betrayed a single point of essential honor or interest, I would have sent it back, as Mr. Je-

erson did the treaty with England, without laying it before the senate. If I had been doubtful, the senate would have decided.

Where, then, was the danger of this negotiation: No where but in the disturbed imagination of Alex. Hamilton. To me only it was dangerous. To me, as a public man, it was fatal, and that only because Alexander Hamilton was pleased to wield it, as a poisoned weapon, with the express purpose of destroying. Though I owe him no thanks for this, I most heartily rejoice in it, because it has given me eight years, incomparably the happiest of my life: whereas, had I been chosen president again, I am certain I could not have lived another year. It was utterly impossible that I could have lived thro' one year more of such labors and cares as were studiously and maliciously accumulated upon me, by the French faction and the British faction; the former aided by the republicans and the latter by Alexander Hamilton, and his satellites.

---

## LETTER XIV.

SIRS,

Mr. Hamilton, in his pamphlet, page 21, speaks of the anterior mission of Messieurs Pinckney, Marshall and Gerry, and says, it was *resolved* to make another, and a more solemn experiment in the form of a commission of three.

When I first read this sentence I am not certain whether it excited most of astonishment, indignation, contempt or ridicule. By *whom* was this measure *resolved*? By President Washington? Certainly not. If it had been he would have nominated the ministers. By the President elect, Mr. Adams? Certainly not—He had not been consulted. His resolutions were not known. By whom, then, was this important resolution taken? By Mr. Hamilton and his privy counsellors. And what had Mr. Hamilton and his privy counsellors to do with the business? and who were his privy counsellors?

Page 22, he says 'the expediency of this step was suggested to Mr. Adams through a federal channel, a considerable time before he determined to take it. He hesitated whether it could be done, after the rejection of Gen. Pinckney, without national debasement. The doubt was an honorable one.' I disclaim and renounce all honor of this doubt. I never entertained such a doubt for a moment. I might ask the opinion of twenty persons, (for I too "consulted much") in order to discover whether there was any doubt in the public mind, or any party who were averse to such a measure or had any doubt about it. But I never had any hesitation myself. This passage, like all all the rest of his pamphlet, shews that it was written from his mere imagination—from confused rumors, or downright false information.

It is true "the expediency of the step was suggested to Mr. Adams," before he took the step and before he had time to take it; but long after he had determined to take it. The mystery may be revealed. I have no motive, whatever others may have, to dissemble it.

The morning after my inauguration, Mr. Fisher Ames made me a visit to take leave. His period in Congress had expired, and the delicacy of his health, the despondency of his disposition and despair of a re-election from the increase of the opposite party in his district, had induced him to decline to stand a candidate. I was no longer to have the assistance of his counsel or eloquence, though Mr. Hamilton continued to enjoy both till his death. Mr. Ames was no doubt one of Mr. Hamilton's privy council, when he *resolved* to send a new commission of three. Mr. Ames with much gravity and solemnity advised me to institute a new mission to France. Our affairs with that republic were in an unpleasant and dangerous situation, and the people, in a long recess of congress, must have some object on which to fix their contemplations and their hopes. And he recommended Mr. George Cabot, for the northern states, to be one of the three, if a commission was to be sent, or alone, if but one was to go.

I answered Mr. Ames, that the subject had almost engrossed my attention for a long time. That I should take every thing into serious consideration and determine nothing suddenly—that I should make deliberate enquiries concerning characters, and maturely consider the qualities and qualifications of candidates, before any thing was finally determined. Mr. Ames departed for Massachusetts.

I had rolled all these things in my own mind long before. The French nation and their government were in a very umbrageous and inflammable disposition. Much delicacy and deliberation were necessary in the choice of characters. Most of the prominent characters in America were as well known in Paris as they were in Philadelphia. I had some thoughts of sending Mr. Madison and Mr. Hamilton to join Mr. Pinckney in a new commission. I had thought of Mr. Ames there in the middle and southern states. I thought much of Mr. himself, as well as Mr. Cabot, Judge Dana, Mr. Gerry, and many of Jefferson, but had great doubts whether the constitution would allow me to send the vice president abroad. The nation at large had assigned him a station, which I doubted whether he had a right to abandon, or I a right to invite him to relinquish, though but for a time.

I had great doubts about re-appointing Mr. Pinckney. He might have been so affected with the horrors he had seen or heard in France, as to have uttered some expressions, which, reported by spies to the ruling powers, might have excited prejudices against him, which would insure his second rejection, and that of his colleagues too. But as I knew of no such accusation, I could not bear the thought of abandoning him.—I had not time to communicate all these reflections to Mr. Ames, and moreover I had business of more importance to do. I had long wished to avail myself and the public

of the fine talents, and amiable qualities of Mr. Madison. Soon after Mr. Ames left me, I sought and obtained an interview with Mr. Jefferson.—With this gentleman I had lived on terms of intimate friendship for five and twenty years, had acted with him in dangerous times and arduous conflicts, and always found him assiduous, laborious, and as far as I could judge, upright and faithful. Though by this time I differed from him in opinion by the whole horizon, concerning the practicability and success of the French revolution, and some other points, I had no reason to think that he differed materially from me with regard to our national constitution. I did not think that the rumbling noise of party calumny ought to discourage me from consulting men, whom I knew to be attached to the interest of the nation, and whose experience, genius, learning and travels had eminently qualified them to give advice.—I asked Mr. Jefferson what he thought of another trip to Paris, and whether he thought the constitution and the people would be willing to spare him for a short time? Are you determined to send to France? Yes. That is right, said Mr. Jefferson; but without considering whether the constitution will allow it or not, I am so sick of residing in Europe: that I believe I shall never go there again. I replied, I own I have strong doubts whether it would be legal to appoint you; but I believe no man could do the business so well. What do you think of sending Mr. Madison? Do you think he would accept of an appointment? I do not know, said Mr. Jefferson. Washington wanted to appoint him some time ago, and kept the place open for him a long time; but he never could get him to say that he would go. Other characters were considered, and other conversation ensued. We parted as good friends as we had always lived: but we consulted very little together afterwards. Party violence soon rendered it impracticable, or at least useless, and this party violence was excited by Hamilton more than any other man. I will not take leave of Mr. Jefferson in this place, without declaring my opinion *that the accusations against him of blind devotion to France—of hostility to England—of hatred to commerce—of partiality and duplicity in his late negotiations with the belligerent powers, are without foundation.*

From Mr. Jefferson I went to one of the heads of departments, whom Mr. Washington had appointed, and I had no thoughts of removing. Indeed I had then no objection to any of the secretaries. I asked him what he thought of sending Mr. Madison to France, with, or without others? Is it determined to send to France at all? Determined? Nothing is determined till it is executed, smiling. But why not?—I thought it deserved consideration.—So it does; but suppose it determined, what do you think of sending Mr. Madison? Is it determined to send Mr. Madison? No? but it deserves consideration.—Sending Mr. Madison will make dire work among the passions of our parties in congress, and out of doors, thro' the states? Are we forever to be overawed and directed by party passions? All this conversation on my part was with the most perfect good humor, and indeed familiarity; but I found it excited a pro-

found gloom and solemn countenance in my companion, which after some time broke out in "Mr. President, we are willing to resign." Nothing could have been more unexpected to me than this observation—Nothing was farther from my thoughts than to give any pain or uneasiness. I had said nothing that could possibly displease except pronouncing the name of Madison. I restrained my surprize, however, and only said, I hope nobody will resign: I am satisfied with all the public officers.

Upon further inquiries of the other heads of departments, and of other persons, I found that party passions had so deep and extensive roots, that I seriously doubted whether the Senate would not negative Mr. Madison, if I should name him. Rather than expose him to a negative, or a doubtful contest in Senate, I concluded to omit him. If I had nominated Madison, I should have nominated Hamilton with him. The former, I knew, was much esteemed in France; the latter was rather an object of jealousy. But I thought the French would tolerate one for the sake of the other. And I thought too that the manners of the one would soon wear off the prejudices against him, and probably make him a greater favorite than the other. But having given up Madison, I ought to give up Hamilton too. Who then should I name? I mentioned Mr. Dana and Mr. Gerry to the heads of departments and to many leading men in both houses. They all preferred Mr. Dana. But it was evident enough to me, that neither Dana nor Gerry was their man.—Dana was appointed and refused. I then called the heads of departments together, and proposed Mr. Gerry. All five voices were unanimously against him. Such inveterate prejudice shocked me. I said nothing, but was determined I would not be the slave of it. I knew the man infinitely better than all of them. He was nominated and approved, and finally saved the peace of the nation; for he alone discovered and furnished the evidence that X. Y. and Z. were employed by Talleyrand; and he alone brought home the direct, formal and official assurances upon which the subsequent commission proceeded, and peace was made.

I considered Mr. Ames's candidate, Mr. Cabot, as deliberately as any of the others, and with as favorable and friendly a disposition towards him as any other, without exception. But I knew his character and connections were as well known in France, particularly by Talleyrand, as Mr. Gerry's were, and that there were great objections against the former, and none at all against the latter. It would be therefore inexcusable in me to hazard the success of the mission merely to gratify the passions of a party in America, especially as I knew Mr. Gerry, to say the least, to be as well qualified by his studies, his experience, and every quality for the service, as the other.

I afterwards nominated Mr. Cabot to be Secretary of the Navy, a station as useful as important, and as honorable as the other, and for which he was eminently qualified. But this he refused.

No man had a greater share in propagating and diffusing these prejudices against Mr. Gerry than Mr. Hamilton, whether he had

formerly conceived jealousies against him as a rival candidate for the secretarship of the treasury: for Mr. Gerry was a financier, and had been employed for years on the committee on the treasury in the old congress, and a most indefatigable member too. That committee had laid the foundation for the present system of the treasury, and had organized it almost as well, though they had not the assistance of clerks and other conveniences, as at present. Any man who will look into the journals of the old congress, may see the organization, and the daily labors and reports of that committee, and may form some judgment of the talents and services of Mr. Gerry in that department. I knew that the officers of the treasury in Hamilton's time dreaded to see him rise in the house on any question of finance, because, they said he was a man of so much influence, that they always feared he would discover some error, or carry some point against them.—Or whether he feared that Mr. Gerry would be president of the United States before him, I know not. He was not alone, however. His friends among the heads of departments, and their correspondents in Boston, New York and Philadelphia, sympathized with him very cordially in his hatred of Gerry, and of every other man who had labored and suffered early in the revolution.

This preference of Mr. Gerry to Mr. Cabot was my first mortal offence against my sovereign heads of departments and their disciples in all the states. It never was or has been forgiven me by those who called themselves, or are called by others, "the leading men" among the federalists.

Mr. Hamilton says, page 49, "After the rejection of Mr. Pinckney by the government of France, immediately after the instalment of Mr. Adams as president, I urged a member of congress, then high in the confidence of the President to propose to him the immediate appointment of three commissioners, of whom Mr. Jefferson or Mr. Madison to be one, to make another attempt to negotiate."

I will relate all that I can recollect relative to this subject. Mr. Tracy of Connecticut, who indeed was always in my confidence, came to me, I believe at the opening of the special session of congress which I called soon after my inauguration, and produced a long elaborate letter from Mr. Hamilton, containing a whole system of instruction for the conduct of the president, the senate, and the house of representatives. I read it very deliberately, and really thought the man was in a delirium. It appeared to me a very extraordinary instance of volunteer empiricism thus to prescribe for a president, senate, and house of representatives, all desperately sick and in a state of deplorable debility, without being called. And when I maturely considered the contents of the letter, my surprize was increased. I despised and detested the letter too much to take a copy of it, which I now regret. This letter is still in being and I doubt not many copies of it are extant. I most earnestly request any gentleman who possesses one to publish it. That letter, though it had no influence with me, had so much with both houses of con-

gress, as to lay the foundation of the overthrow of the federal party, and of the revolution that followed four years afterwards. I will endeavor to recollect as much of the contents as I can, and if I am incorrect in any point, those who possess the letter can, by the publication of it, easily set all right.

It began by a dissertation on the extraordinarily critical situation of the U. States.

It recommended a new mission to France of three commissioners, Mr. Jefferson or Mr. Madison to be one.

It recommended the raising an army of fifty thousand men, ten thousand of them to be cavalry, an army of great importance in so extensive a country, vulnerable at so many points on the frontiers, and so accessible in so many places by sea.

It recommended an alien and sedition law.

It recommended an invigoration of the treasury, by seizing on all the taxable articles not yet taxed by the government—And lastly,

It recommended a national fast, not only on account of the intrinsic propriety of it, but because we should be very unskilful if we neglect to avail ourselves of the religious feelings of the people in a crisis so difficult and dangerous. There might be more, but these are all that I now recollect.

Mr. Hamilton's imagination was always haunted by that hideous monster or phantom, so often called a *crisis*, and which so often produces imprudent measures.

How it happened that Mr. Hamilton's contemplations coincided so exactly with mine, as to think of Mr. Jefferson or Mr. Madison, for envoy to France, it may be more difficult to explain. But let it be considered that this letter was written long after my conversation with Mr. Jefferson, concerning himself and Mr. Madison, which was the morning after my inauguration, that I had communicated that conversation to one or more of the heads of departments the same morning. It is probable therefore, that Mr. Hamilton received hints from some of his correspondents that I had thought of Madison and Hamilton, and that he was not displeased with the idea. I asked one of the heads of departments, how he could account for Hamilton's recommending Jefferson or Madison? "Why," said the gentleman, "I suppose Hamilton is weary of his practice as an attorney at New York, and is willing to enter into some other employment." Mr. Hamilton, however, might thank those who had been his warmest friends for his disappointment; for had it not been for their opposition to Madison, I should have appointed him and Hamilton.

The army of fifty thousand men, ten thousand of them to be horse, appeared to me to be one of the wildest extravagancies of a Knight Errant. It proved to me that Mr. Hamilton knew no more of the sentiments and feelings of America, than he did of those of the inhabitants of one of the planets. Such an army, without an enemy to combat, would have raised a rebellion in every state in the union. The very idea would have turned president, senate and house out of

doors. I adopted none of these chimeras into my speech, and only recommended the raising of a few regiments of artillery to garrison the fortifications of the most exposed places. Yet such was the influence of Mr. Hamilton in Congress, that without any recommendation from the president, they passed a bill to raise an army, not a large one indeed, but enough to overturn the then federal government.

Nor did I adopt his idea of an alien or sedition law. I recommended no such thing in my speech. Congress, however, adopted both these measures. I knew there was need enough of both, and therefore I consented to them. But as they were then considered as war measures and intended altogether against the advocates of the French and peace with France, I was apprehensive that a hurricane of clamor would be raised against them, as in truth there was, even more fierce and violent than I had anticipated.

Seizing on all taxable articles not yet taxed, to support an army of fifty thousand men, at a time when so many tax laws, already enacted, were unexecuted in so many states, and when insurrections and rebellions had already been excited in Pennsylvania, on account of taxes, appeared to me altogether desperate, altogether delirious.

I wanted no admonition from Mr. Hamilton to institute a national fast. I had determined on this measure long enough before Mr. Hamilton's letter was written. And here let me say, with great sincerity, that I think there is nothing upon this earth more sublime and affecting than the idea of a great nation all on their knees at once before their God, acknowledging their faults, and imploring his blessing and protection, when the prospect before them threatens great danger and calamity. It can scarcely fail to have a favorable effect on their morals in general, or to inspire them with warlike virtues in particular. When most, if not all the religious sects in the nation, hold such fasts among themselves, I never could see the force of the objections against making them, on great and extraordinary occasions, national; unless it be the jealousy of the separate states, lest the general government should become too national. Those, however, who differ from me in opinion on this point, have as good a right to their judgment, as I have to mine, and I shall submit mine to the general will.

In fine, Mr. Hamilton, in the passage I have been commenting in this letter, has let out facts, which if he had possessed a grain of common sense, he would have wished should be forever concealed. I should never have revealed or explained them, if he and his partizans had not compelled me.

---

## LETTER XV.

SIRS,

In page 26, is a strain of flimsy rant, as silly as it is indecent. "The supplement to the declaration was a blameable excess." It



waved the point of honor, which after two rejections of our ministers, required that the next mission, should proceed from France.

Where did he find this point of honor? If any such point had existed, it had its full force against the second mission; and its principal force consisted in the formal declaration of the directory, that it "never would receive another plenipotentiary without apologies for the president's speeches, and answers to addresses." If we had a right to wave this point of honor in one instance, we had in two, especially as one member of the second mission was the same man who had been rejected in the first. But after the explicit retraction of the declaration that they would not receive a minister without apologies, the point of honor was completely done away. To give them an opportunity of retracting that declaration, I declared in my message to congress, that I would not send another minister to France, till this declaration was retracted by assurances that he should be received in character. They embraced the opportunity cordially when they might have avoided the humiliation by sending a minister here. And whatever Hamilton's opinion might be, I knew that they might have negociated more to their advantage here than at Paris. Hamilton's fingers had not the tact, or tactility, if you like word better, of the public pulse.

In page 67, he argues the probability that France would have sent a minister here from the fact that she did afterwards "stifle her resentments, and invite the renewal of negociations." I know not whether this is an example of Mr. Hamilton's "Analysis of Investigation" or not. It is an argument *a posteriori*—It is reasoning upward or backward.

These invitations were not known, nor made when I pledged myself, by implication at least, to send a minister, when such invitations should be made. When they were made I considered my honor and the honor of the government committed—And I have not the smallest doubt but Hamilton thought so too; and that one of his principal vexations was that neither himself nor his privy counsellors could have influence enough with me to persuade or intimidate me to disgrace myself in the eyes of the people of America and the world, by violating my parole.

This he might think would assist him in his caucuses at N. York and Philadelphia, where the honor, not only of every member, but of every state and every elector was to be pledged, to give an equal vote for Pinckney and Adams, that the choice of president should be left to the house of representatives, whose members, on the day of election, or the day before, were to be furnished with this pamphlet, spick and spun, to make sure of *the sacrifice* of Adams—But more of this hereafter.

In the mean time, what reasons had we to expect that the French government would send a minister here? Such an idea had been whispered in private conversation perhaps, by Dr. Logan and some others; but we had not a color of official information to that effect, that I remember. What motives had the French to send a minister?

They had committed depredations upon our commerce to the amount, it has been said, of twenty millions of dollars. Would the directory have been animated with any great zeal to send an ambassador to offer us compensation for those spoiliations, at a time when they were driven to their wits ends to find revenues and resources to carry on the war in Europe, and break the confederation against them.

We had declared the treaty of alliance and all treaties between France and the U. States, null and void. Do we suppose the French government would have been in haste to send an ambassador to offer us a solemn revocation, by treaty, of all former treaties? What urgent motive could the French have to be in haste to send a minister? They could not be apprehensive that we should send an army to Europe to conquer France, or assist her enemies. We had no naval power sufficient to combat their navy in Europe, which was then far from being reduced as it has been since. They had no commerce or mercantile navigation, upon which our little navy or privateers could have made reprisals.

There is but one motive that I can imagine should have stimulated them very much, and that is, the apprehension that we might enter into an alliance offensive and defensive with Great Britain. This they might have considered as a serious affair to them in a course of time, though they might not fear any immediate harm from it. But I doubt not the French had information from a thousand emissaries, and Talleyrand knew, from personal observation, in various parts of America, and Hamilton must have known, if he had any feeling of the popular pulse, that a vast majority of the people of America dreaded an alliance with Great Britain more than a war with France. It would have taken a long time, it would have required a long and bloody war with France, and a violent exasperation of the public mind to have reconciled the people to any such measure—No, Hamilton and his associates could not have seriously believed that the French would soon send a minister here. If they had not, or if they had delayed it, Hamilton would have continued at the head of his army—continual provocations and irritations would have taken place between the two nations, till one or the other would have declared war. In the mean time it was my opinion then, and has been ever since, that the two parties in the United States would have broken out into a civil war; a majority of all the states to the southward of Hudson river united with nearly half New England, would have raised an army under Aaron Burr; a majority of New England might have raised another under Hamilton—Burr would have beat Hamilton to pieces, and what would have followed next let the prophets foretell. But such would have been the result of Hamilton's "enterprizes of great pith and moment." I say this would probably have been the course and result of things, had a majority of New England continued to be attached to Hamilton, his men and measures. But I am far from believing this. On the contrary, had not our envoys proceeded, had not the people expected a treaty with France from that negotiation, New England herself, at the elections

of 1800, would have turned out Hamilton's whole party, and united with the southern and middle states in bringing in men who might have made peace on much less advantageous terms.

And now let the world judge who "consulted much"—who "pondered much"—who "resolved slowly"—and who "resolved surely."

## LETTER XVI.

SIRS,

In page 28, Mr. Hamilton acknowledges that "the president had pledged himself in his speech, (he should have said in his message) to send a minister, if satisfactory assurances of a proper reception were given." Notwithstanding this Mr. Hamilton and all his confidential friends, exerted their utmost art and most strenuous endeavors to prevail on the president to violate this pledge. What can any man think of the disposition of these men towards the personal or official character of the president? But that they were secretly, if not avowedly, his most determined and most venomous enemies? When the measure had been solemnly, irrevocably determined, and could not be recalled nor delayed without indecible dishonor—I own I was astonished, I was grieved to see such artificial schemes employed, such delays studied, such embarrassments thrown in the way—by men who were, or at least ought to have been, my bosom friends.

This was a point of honor indeed: not such a stupid, fantastical point of honor as that which Mr. Hamilton maintains with so much fanaticism and so much folly—but a point of honor in which my moral character was involved as well as the public faith of the nation. Hamilton's point of honor was such as one of those Irish duelists, who love fighting better than feasting, might have made a pretext, for sending a challenge—and however conformable it might be to Hamilton's manner of thinking, it was altogether inconsistent with the moral, religious and political character of the people of America.

It was such a point of honor as a Machavilian or a Jesuit might have made a pretext for a war. It was such a point of honor as a Roman senate, in the most corrupt days of that republic, might have made a pretext for involving the nation in a foreign war—when Patrician monopolies of land, and Patrician usury at twelve per cent. per month had excited the Plebeian debtors to the crisis of a civil war. But the American people were not Roman Plebians. They were not to be deceived by such thin disguises.

Surely those who have lately censured Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison, for insisting on knowing the satisfaction that was to be given for the outrage on the Chesapeake, before they revoked a certain

proclamation, can never blame me for not insisting on a point that was no point of honor at all.

In page 28, Mr. Hamilton says 'When the president pledged himself in his speech (he should have said his message) to send a minister, if satisfactory assurances of a proper reception were given, he must have been understood to mean such as were *direct and official*, not such as were both *informal and destitute of a competent sanction*.'

The words 'direct and indirect,' 'official and inofficial,' 'formal and informal,' 'competent sanction,' &c. appear to have seized this gentleman's mind—and to have rolled and tumbled in it, till they had produced an entire confusion of his understanding.

He here supposes that I did not understand my own message, and patriotically undertook to expound it both for me and the public.—According to his metaphysics, I meant by assurances of a proper reception, assurances direct and official, not such as were informal. Let me ask, what more formal or official assurances could have been given than Talleyrand's letters? What more formal, official, or direct, than Mr. Gerry's letters? If I understand Mr. Hamilton, he must have meant to say that my message demanded an ambassador to be sent directly from the Directory to me, for the express purpose of assuring me that they would receive a minister plenipotentiary from me. This, instead of being my meaning was directly the reverse of it. From first to last I had refused to be taken in this snare. I had always refused to demand that a minister should be sent here first, though I had declared explicitly enough in my speech, that a French minister, if sent should be received. I had always insisted that both the doors of negotiation should be held open. And as I have already said I now repeat that I preferred to send a minister rather than receive one; not only for the reasons explained in a former letter, but because I thought the *amende honorable* ought to be made at Paris where the offence was given; where it would be known and observed by all Europe—whereas if it had been made at Philadelphia, little notice would have been taken of it by any part of the world.

I am somewhat disappointed in not finding in this pamphlet the word "obscure" applied to Mr. Pichon, because the newspapers in Boston, New York and Philadelphia, written by Mr. Hamilton's coadjutors and fellow laborers in the same field of scandal, had profusely scattered their dull sarcasms on the obscurity of the agent or agents at the Hague. Mr. Pichon obscure? A secretary of legation and charge des affaires obscure? Especially in the absence of his ambassador? The office of secretary of legation is an object of ambition and desire to many of the first scientific and literary characters in Europe. The place is worth about a thousand guineas a year, affords a fine opportunity and great advantages for travel, and is commonly a sure road to promotion. These secretaries are almost always men of science, letters and business. They are often more relied upon than the ambassadors themselves for the substan-

tial part of business. Ambassadors are often chosen for their birth, rank, title, riches, beauty, elegance of manners, or good humor. They are intended to do honor to their sovereigns by their appearance and representation. Secretaries of legation are selected for their science, learning, talents, industry and habits of business. I doubt not Mr. Locke or Sir Isaac Newton in their younger days would have thought themselves fortunate to have been offered such a place. Would these have been called obscure? Was Matthew Prior or David Hume obscure? Yet both of them were secretaries of legation.

Such reflections as these which were thrown upon Mr. Pichon might impose upon a people who knew no better than the writers, but must have been despised by every man who knew any thing of the world.

Had Talleyrand sent his letters to general Washington to be communicated to the secretary of state, had he sent them to the Spanish minister to be by him communicated to the secretary of state, or to the Dutch minister for the same purpose, I do not say that I would have nominated a minister in consequence of them: nor will I say that I would not. There is no need to determine this question, because in fact the utmost rigor of diplomatic etiquette was observed. But I will say that my message demanded nothing but evidence to convince my own mind and give satisfaction to the senate and the public, that a minister would be received—And if such evidence had arrived to me, in any manner that would leave no doubt in the public mind I would not have sacrificed the national neutrality to any diplomatic trammels or shackles whatever.

---

## LETTER XVII.

SIRS,

In page 26, Mr. Hamilton says, that the mission “could hardly fail to injure our interests with other countries.”

This is another of those phantoms which he had conjured up to terrify minds and nerves as weak as his own. It was a common place theme of discourse, which, no doubt the British faction very efficaciously assisted him in propagating. I know it made impressions on some, from whose lips I too often heard it, and from whom I expected more sense and firmness. It appeared to me so mean, servile and timorous, that I own I did not always hear it with patience.

Which were those other countries? They could not be Spain, Holland or any countries in the north or south of Europe which were in alliance with France or under her obedience. They could be only England, Russia and Sweden; for we had nothing to do with any but maritime powers. And what interest of ours could be injured with any of these powers? Would any of these powers make war upon

and sacrifice the benefits they received from our commerce, because we made peace with France, asserted and maintained our impartial neutrality, and stipulated nothing inconsistent with their rights, honor or dignity? If such chimerical fears as these were to govern our conduct, it was idle to talk of our independence. We might as well petition the King and Parliament of Great Britain to take us again under their gracious protection.

In page 36, he says, I might secretly and confidently have nominated one or more of our ministers actually abroad for the purpose of treating with France, with eventual instructions predicated upon appearances of an approaching peace."

Mr. Hamilton had entirely forgot the constitution of the United States. All nominations must be made to the Senate, and if the president requests and the senate enjoins secrecy, secrecy will not be kept. Stephens Thompson Mason was then a member of the Senate—and if he had not been, there were twenty other means of communicating the thing to the public. Had secrecy been requested and enjoined when Mr. Murray was nominated, every man whose emulation was mortified, would have had the secret in three hours. But had the secret been kept, Mr. Murray must have gone to Paris with his full powers, or must have communicated them to Mr. Fichon—the French government must have appointed a minister to treat with him—their full powers must have been exchanged—neither the French government nor their minister would have kept it secret. And why all this cunning? That we might not give umbrage to England. This very motive, if there had been any thing in it, would have induced the French to proclaim it to all Europe. In truth, such a sneaking idea never entered my brain, and if it had, I would have spurned it as unworthy a moment's consideration. Besides, this would have been the very indirect, circuitous mode that Mr. Hamilton so deeply deploras.

In this page 37, another instance is given of my jealousy, and suspicious disposition. The most open, unsuspecting man alive, is accused of excessive suspicion.

I transiently asked one of the heads of departments, whether Ellsworth and Hamilton had come all the way from Windsor and New York to persuade me to countermand the mission. How came Mr. Hamilton to be informed of this?

I know of no motive of Mr. Ellsworth's journey. However I have already acknowledged that Mr. Ellsworth's conduct was perfectly proper. He used no influence, or argument, for counteracting or postponing the mission.

Unsuspecting as I was, I could not resist the evidence of my senses. Hamilton, unasked, had volunteered his influence with all the arguments his genius could furnish, all the eloquence he possessed, and all the vehemence of action his feeble frame could exert. He had only betrayed his want of information, and his ardent zeal to induce me to break my word and violate the faith of the government. I know of no business he had at Trenton. Indeed I knew

that in strict propriety he had no right to come to Trenton at all without my leave. He was stationed at Newark, in the command of his division of the army, where he ought to have been employed in accommodating, disciplining and teaching his troops, if he had been capable of it. He wisely left these things to another officer, who understood them better, but whom he hated for that very reason.

I have no more to say upon this great subject. Indeed I am weary of exposing puerilities that would disgrace the awkwardest boy at college.

---

## LETTER XVIII.

SIRS,

In page 20, Mr. Hamilton says, my 'conduct in the office of president was a heterogenous compound of right and wrong, of wisdom and error.' As at that time, in my opinion, his principal rule of right and wrong, of wisdom and error, was his own ambition and indelicate pleasures, I despise his censure, and should consider his approbation as a satire on my administration.

'The outset,' he says, 'was distinguished by a speech which his friends lamented as temporizing. It had the air of a lure for the favor of his opponents at the expence of his sincerity.' Until I read this, I never heard one objection to that speech, and I have never heard another since, except in a letter from a lady, who said she did not like it, because there was but one period in it, and that period was too long. I fully agree with that lady's opinion, and now thank her for her criticism. Since that time I have never heard or read, except in Wood's history, any objection or criticism.

That address was dictated in the same spirit which produced my conference the next day with Mr. Jefferson, in which I proposed to him the idea of sending him to France, and the more serious thought of nominating Mr. Madison. It sprung from a very serious apprehension of danger to our country, and a sense of justice to individuals from that arbitrary and exclusive principle of faction which confines all employments and promotions to its own favorites. There is a distinction founded in truth and nature between party and faction. The former is founded in principle and system, concerning the public good—the latter in private interest and passions. An honest party man will never exclude talents and virtues, and qualities eminentlly useful to the public, merely on account of a difference in opinion. A factious man will exclude every man alike, saint or sinner, who will not be a blind, passive tool. If I had been allowed to follow my own ideas, Hamilton and Burr, with submission to Divine Providence, would have been alive at this hour—General Muhlenburg, of Pennsylvania, would have been a brigadier, under Hamilton, in the

army, as long as it lasted—and the great body of Germans in Pennsylvania, instead of being disgraced with imputations of rebellion, would have been good friends to the government. I have not room to develop all this at present.

But I soon found myself shackled. The heads of departments were exclusive patriots. I could not name a man who was not devoted to Hamilton without kindling a fire.

The Senate was now decidedly federal. During President Washington's whole administration of eight years, his authority in Senate was extremely weak. The Senate were equally divided on all great constitutional questions, and in all great questions of foreign relations, and such as were the most sharply contested were brought to my decision as vice president.

When I was elected, the states had been pleased to make an entire change in the senate. Two thirds of that honorable body were now decidedly federal. And prosperity had its usual effect, on federal minds. It made them confident and presumptuous. I soon found, that if I had not the previous consent of the heads of departments, and the approbation of Hamilton, I run the utmost risque of a dead negative in the Senate. One such negative at least I had, after a very formal and a very uncivil remonstrance of one of their large, un-constitutional committees in secret.

I have great reason to believe that Mr. Jefferson came into office with the same spirit that I did—that is, with a sincere desire of conciliating parties, as far as he possibly could, consistently with his principles. But he soon found, as I did, that the senate had a decided majority of republicans, five or six to one, a much greater majority than there was in my time, of federalists, which were never more than two to one.

In the house of representatives, in Mr. Washington's time, the majority of federalists was very small. In my time it was somewhat larger, but still small. In Mr. Jefferson's time the majority of republicans was immense, two or three, or four, to one. Consciousness of this strength had the same effect upon republicans as it had upon federalists in my time. It made them confident, exclusive and presumptuous. Mr. Jefferson found it impossible, as I did, to follow his own inclination on many occasions.

It may be thought presumption in me to impute errors to the nation; but as I have never concealed from the people any truth which it was important for them to know, nor any opinion of my own, which was material in public affairs, I hope to be excused if I suggest that the general sentiment in most parts of the continent, that all the danger to liberty arises from the executive power, and that the president's office cannot be too much restrained, is an error.

Corruption in almost all free governments has begun and been first introduced in the legislature. When any portion of executive power has been lodged in popular or aristocratical assemblies, it has seldom, if ever, failed to introduce intrigue. The executive powers lodged in the senate are the most dangerous to the constitution



and to liberty of all the powers in it. The people then ought to consider the president's office as the indispensable guardian of their rights. I have ever, therefore, been of opinion, that the electors of president ought to be chosen by the people at large. The people cannot be too careful in the choice of their presidents; but when they have chosen them, they ought to expect that they will act their own independent judgments, and not be wheedled nor intimidated by factious combinations of senators, representatives, heads of departments or military officers.

The exclusive principle which has been adopted, and too openly avowed by both our great divisions, when the pendulum has swung to their side, is a principle of faction, and not of honest party. It is intolerance! It is despotism! It destroys the freedom of the press! The freedoms of elections! The freedom of debate! the freedom of deliberation! the freedom of private judgment! And as long as the senate shall be determined to negative all but their own party, the president can have no will or judgment of his own. I most earnestly entreat all parties to reconsider their resolutions on this subject.

---

## LETTER XIX.

SIRS,

In page 29, Mr. Hamilton says, "when an ordinary man dreams himself to be a Frederick," &c.

To this I shall make but a short answer. When a Miss of the street shall print a pamphlet in London, and call the Queen of England, an ordinary woman who dreams herself a Catharine of Russia, no Englishman will have the less esteem for his queen for that impudent libel.

There is something in the 24th page of a graver complexion. It is said, "that the session which ensued the promulgation of the dispatches of our commissioners was about to commence. This was the session of 1798. Mr. Adams arrived at Philadelphia. The tone of his mind seemed to be raised.

Let me ask a candid public, how did Mr. Hamilton know any thing of the *tone* of Mr. Adams's mind, either before or at that conference? To make the comparison, he must have known the state of Mr. Adams's mind at both these periods. He had never conversed with Mr. Adams before, nor was he present at that conference.—Who was the musician that took the pitch of Mr. Adams's mind, at the two moments here compared together? And what was the musical instrument, or whose exquisite ear was it that ascertained so nicely the vibrations of the air, and Mr. Adams's sensibility to them? Had Mr. Hamilton a spy in the cabinet? Who transmitted to him, from day to day, the confidential communications between the pre-

sident and heads of departments? If there existed such a spy, why might he not communicate these conferences to Mr. Liston, or the Marquis Yrujo, as well as Mr. Hamilton? He had as clear a right. I believe that all the privy councillors of the world but our own are under an oath of secrecy; and ours ought to be. But as they are not, their own honor and sense of propriety ought, with them, to be obligations as sacred as an oath.

The truth is, I had arrived at Philadelphia, from a long journey, which had been delayed longer than I intended, very much fatigued; and as no time was to be lost, I sent for the heads of departments, to consult, in the evening, upon the points to be inserted in the speech to Congress, who were soon to meet.

My intention was, in the language of the lawyers, merely to break the questions, or moot the points necessary for us to consider; not intending to express any opinion of my own, or to request any opinion of theirs upon any point; but merely to take the questions into their consideration, and give me their advice upon all of them at a future meeting.

I observed, that I found, by various sources of information, and particularly by some of the papers in Boston and New York, that there was a party who expected an unqualified recommendation of a declaration of war against France.

These paragraphs, I was well satisfied, were written by gentlemen who were in the confidence and correspondence of Hamilton and one of the heads of departments at least, though I gave them no intimation of this.

I said to the gentlemen that I supposed it would be expected of us, that we should consider this question, and be able to give our reasons for the determination, whatever it might be.

The conduct of the gentlemen upon this question was such as I wished it to be upon all the others. Not one of them gave an opinion either for or against a declaration of war. There was something, however, in the total silence and reserve of all of them, and in the countenances of some, that appeared to me to be the effect of disappointment. It seemed to me, that they expected I should have proposed a declaration of war, and only asked their advice to sanction it. However, not a word was said.

That there was a disappointment, however, in Hamilton and his friends, is apparent enough from this consideration—that when it was known that a declaration of war was not to be recommended in the president's speech, a caucus was called, of members of congress, to see if they could not get a vote for a declaration of war, without any recommendation from the president, as they had voted the alien and sedition law and the army. What passed in that caucus, and how much zeal there was in some, and who they were, Judge Sewall can tell better than I. All that I shall say, is, that Mr. Hamilton's friends could not carry the vote.

My second proposition to the heads of departments was to consider, in case we should determine against a declaration of war, what

was the state of our relations with France, and whether any further attempt at negociation should be made.

Instead of the silence and reserve with which my first question was received, Mr. Hamilton shall relate what was said.

Mr. Hamilton says, "It was suggested to him, Mr. Adams, that it might be expedient to insert in the speech, a sentiment of this import, that after the repeatedly rejected advances of this country, its dignity required that it should be left with France, in future, to make the first overture; that if desirous of reconciliation, she should evince the disposition by sending a minister to this government; he would be received with the respect due to his character, and treated with, in the frankness of a sincere desire of accommodation. The suggestion was received in a manner both indignant and intemperate."

I demand again, how did Mr. Hamilton obtain this information? Had he a spy in the cabinet? If he had, I own I had rather that all the courts in Europe should have had spies there; for they could have done no harm by any true information they could have obtained there; whereas Hamilton has been able to do a great deal of mischief, by the pretended information he has published.

It is very true, that I thought this proposition intended to close the avenues to a peace, and to ensure a war with France; for I did believe that some of the heads of departments were confident in their minds, that France would not send a minister here.

From the intimate intercourse between Hamilton and some of the heads of departments, which is demonstrated to the world and to posterity, by this pamphlet, I now appeal to every candid and impartial man, whether there is not reason to suspect and to believe, whether there is not a presumption, a violent presumption, that Hamilton himself had furnished this machine to his correspondent in the cabinet, for the very purpose of ensnaring me unawares, of ensuring a war with France, and enabling him to mount his hobby-horse, the command of an army of fifty thousand, ten thousand of them to be horse?

Hamilton says, "the suggestion was received in a manner both indignant and intemperate." This is false. It is true, it was urged with so much obstinacy, perseverance and indecency, not to say intemperance, that at last I declared I would not adopt it, in clear and strong terms.

Mr. Hamilton says, "Mr. Adams declared, as a sentiment he had adopted on mature reflection, that if France should send a minister here to-morrow, he would order him back the day after."

Here I ask again, where, how, and from whom did he get this information? Was it from his spy in the cabinet? Or was it the fabrication of his own 'sublimated, eccentric,' and intemperate imagination? In either case, it is an entire misrepresentation.

I said that when in my retirement at Quincy, the idea of the French government sending a minister here, had sometimes occurred to me, my first thoughts were, that I would send him back the

next day after his arrival, as a retaliation for their sending ours back ; and because the affront offered to us had been at Paris, publicly, in the face of all Europe, the atonement ought to be upon the same theatre ; and because, as the French government had publicly and officially declared that they would receive no minister from the United States until the president had made apologies for his speeches and answers to addresses, they ought to be made to retract and take back that rash declaration, on the same spot where it had been made. They might send a minister here consistently with that declaration. This was my first thought : but upon mature reflection, I saw that this would not be justifiable ; for to retaliate one breach of principle by another breach of principle, was neither the morality nor the policy that had been taught me by my father nor my tutors. Our principle was, that the right of embassy was sacred. I would therefore sacredly respect it, if they sent a minister here. But I would not foreclose myself from sending a minister to France, if I saw an opening for it, consistent with our honor ; in short that I would leave both doors and all doors open wide open for a negotiation. All this refutation came from myself, not from the heads of departments.

All that he says in this place, and in the beginning of the next page, of my wavering, is false. My mind never underwent any revolution or alteration at all after I left Quincy. I inserted no declaration in my speech, that I would not send a minister to France : nor any declaration, that if France would give assurances of receiving a minister from this country, I would send one. Nothing like that declaration was ever made, except in my message to congress of the 21st of June, 1798, in these words : " I will never send another minister to France, without assurances that he will be received, respected and honored, as the representative of a great, free, powerful and independent nation " This declaration finally effected the peace.

Both the doors of negotiation were left open. The French might send a minister here without conditions—we might send one to France, upon condition, of a certainty that he would be received in character.

What conduct did the French government hold in consequence of this declaration ? they retracted their solemn and official declaration, that they would receive no minister plenipotentiary, in future, from the United States, without apologies from the President for his speeches and answers to addresses. They withdrew, and expressly disavowed all claims of loans and douceurs, which had been held up in a very high tone. They even gave encouragement, I might say they promised to make provision for an equitable compensation for spoliations. They promised to receive our ministers, and they did receive them and made peace with them—a peace that completely accomplished a predominant wish of my heart for five and twenty years before—which was, to place our relations with France and with Great Britain, upon a footing of equality and impartiality—that we might be able to preserve, in future, an everlasting neutrality in all the wars of Europe.

now, with great pleasure, that England professes to acknowledge and adopt this our principle of impartiality, and I hope that she will soon adopt it too. The two powers ought to see that it is the only principle we can adopt with safety to ourselves or justice.

If this is an error, it is an error in which I have been unchangeably fixed for five and thirty years—in the course of which I have never seen reason to suspect it to be so, and I now despair of discovering any such reasons.

Nevertheless, Mr. Hamilton calls the declaration that accomplished all this a pernicious declaration!

Pernicious it was to his views of ambition and domination. It extinguished his hopes of being at the head of a victorious army of fifty thousand men: without which, he used to say, he had no idea of having his head upon his shoulders for four years longer.

Thus it is, when self sufficient ignorance impertinently obtrudes itself into offices and departments, in which it has no right, nor color, nor pretence to interfere.

Thus it is, when ambition undertakes to sacrifice all characters, and the peace of nations, to its own private interest.

I have now finished all I had to say on the negotiations and peace with France in 1800—I find I must say something of the peace with England, in 1783.

In the mean time, when I look back on the opposition and embarrassments I had to overcome, from the faction of British subjects, from that large body of Americans who revere the English and abhor the French, from some of the heads of departments, from so many gentlemen in senate, and so many more in the house of representatives, and from the insidious and dark intrigues, as well as open remonstrances of Mr. Hamilton, I am astonished at the event.

In some of my jocular moments I have compared myself to an animal I have seen take hold of a chord with his teeth and be drawn slowly up by pulleys, through a storm of squibs, crackers, and rockets flashing and blazing around him every moment: and though the scorching flames made him groan, and mourn, and roar, he would not let go his hold till he had reached the ceiling of a lofty theatre, where he hung some time, still suffering a flight of rockets, and at last descended through another storm of burning powder, and never let go, till his four feet are safely landed on the floor.

In some of my social hours I have quoted Virgil:

*Fata obstant, placidasque viri Deus obstruit aures:*

*Ac velut annoso validam cum robore quercum*

*Alpini Boreæ nunc hinc nunc flatibus illinc*

*Eruere inter se certant; ite stridor; et alte*

*Consternunt terram concussio stipite frondes:*

*Ipsa hæret scopulis: et quantum in virtice ad auras*

*Ætherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.*

*Haud secus assiduis hinc atque hinc voibus heros*

*Tunditur et magno persentit pectore curas.*

*Mens immota manet: lacrimæ velvuntur inanes—Lib. 4 440.*

His hardened heart nor prayers nor threatenings move :  
 Fate and the Gods had stopp'd his ears,  
 As when the winds their airy quarrels try,  
 Justling from every quarter of the sky :  
 This way and that the mountain oak they bend,  
 His boughs they shatter, and his branches rend ;  
 With leaves and falling mast, they spread the ground,  
 The hollow vallies to the echo sound :  
 Unmov'd the sturdy plant their fury mocks,  
 Or shaken clings more closely to the rocks :  
 Far as he shoots his towering head on high,  
 So deep in earth his deep foundations lie ;  
 No less a storm the Trojan hero bears,  
 Thick messages and loud complaints he hears,  
 And bandied words still beating on his ears.  
 Sighs, groans and tears proclaim his inward pain,  
 But firm the purpose of his heart remains.

*Dryden, B. 5 186*

But this is all levity. There have been sober hours, not a few  
 and I know not that there has been one, in which I have not ador-  
 ed that Providence of Almighty God, which alone could have carri-  
 ed me safely through to a successful issue, this transaction and so  
 many others, equally difficult and infinitely more dangerous to my  
 life, if not to my reputation.

JOHN ADAMS









